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HELEN GRANT, SENIOR



## BOOKS BY AMANDA M. DOUGLAS

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THEY LIKED THE SAME PICTURES, AND STUDIED THEM TOGETHER.

*Page 22.*



The Helen Grant Books

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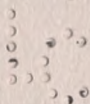
# HELEN GRANT, SENIOR

BY

AMANDA M. DOUGLAS

Author of "Helen Grant in College," "Helen Grant's School-days," "In the King's Country," "In Trust," "Larry,"  
"The Kathie Stories," "Almost as Good  
as a Boy," etc.

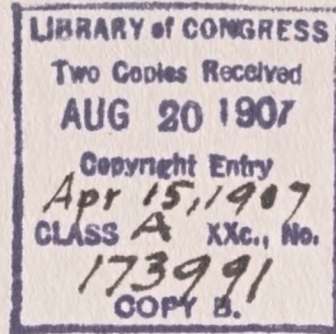
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BOSTON  
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HELEN GRANT, SENIOR



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# Helen Grant, Senior

## CHAPTER I

### A GLAD RETURN

“OH, Miss Grant! You have stolen a march upon us, and we had counted on you so much. We had settled upon you for class president. We were not going to have any fiasco this time, but take up the matter soberly, discreetly, and wisely, and you have flown over our heads and settled on the next branch of the tree of knowledge.”

“However did you do it without one of us mistrusting? To capture the prize, and then skip a whole year! Well, you were born for luck; and I’ve heard that was better than being born handsome.”

“Beauty, rather than wit, rules the world,” commented a voice sententiously.

“I think hard study did it. The isms and



ologies and Greek and all do not come by nature," and Helen smiled.

"And your chum isn't coming back? She would never find another girl so devoted. I can see why she adored you, but I can't understand how you came to like her so well."

Helen flushed, and for an instant felt a trifle awkward.

"There were many nice things about her. She was neat and orderly, and in some ways I felt sorry for her. She didn't come to college from her own desire, but was sent rather against her will. And I do admire her present course. She has a nice lover, a young man making a brave struggle with circumstances, and she has obtained a position to teach in school. They will be engaged two years, and meanwhile, be getting ready for their own home."

"Why, that's quite romantic in a commonplace way; college girls needn't despair. That recalls Hilda Redick to mind. She wasn't engaged last winter, and she was really dismissed. With all the pretensions she made, she is doing typewriting. My cousin is in the



same office, and he doesn't admire her a bit."

"Typewriting and trained nursing are steps to matrimony. I'm not sure but that college is a waste of years and endeavor."

There was a general laugh at that.

"Well, Miss Grant, we are very sorry to lose you," declared Miss Van Duyne. "You would have been a credit to the sophomores. I was going to beg you for a roommate; I wouldn't have bored you, nor made heavy demands upon you."

"Thank you," Helen squeezed Miss Van Duyne's hand.

"And we're all very sorry not to have you for our bright and shining example, — oh, no, exemplar is the word, I think. But do not hold your head so high that you can't see us as we pass by. How you must have studied!"

A dozen or more girls had waylaid Helen as she turned into the oval. They were all sophomores. She was going on to Ames Hall, and a girl rushed out to meet her; it was Lorraine Denman.



"Oh, you dear! I was afraid you wouldn't come on that train. Girls, she's a junior —"

"Oh, we've been congratulating her, and bewailing our own loss. It is too bad for us. Think of the *éclat* she might have won for us!"

Lorraine linked her arm in that of Helen. She was an enthusiastic, but not a really effusive girl. Still, as they entered the doorway, she kissed Helen and said just above her breath, "I'm so glad to get you back. There's a room next to mine that I've been holding. The sun rises in it, and that's exhilarating."

"But — if I shouldn't pass!" Helen stopped short.

"Oh, you will, I know! Miss Brooks said it was a sure thing."

"Oh, is she here?"

"She was. She came last night, and was sent for this morning. Her sister has just died. There was something about it —" Lorraine drew her brows a little — "her sister has been in a sanatorium for several years, I believe. I think that was why she tutored and did so much, and wasn't she brave and cheerful!"



“Oh!” Helen said, both in admiration and sympathy.

Girls met them on the stairway, nodded, and some paused with a word of welcome. Helen knew her way; she had been in Ames Hall. It was not as large as the Freshmen's House, the girls going to and fro were older and had a different air, and some of the rooms where the doors stood open were quite luxuriously appointed with pictures, cushions, and dainty furniture. They went to Lorraine's room.

“I didn't suppose we would ever be together, and now two years, think of it! Oh, you must come to love me just as well as you did that Trevor girl, though I'll promise not to demand so much of you! Why so serious? Did she take all your heart?” and Lorraine studied Helen's countenance eagerly, as a gentle sort of gravity shadowed it.

“I liked her because she seemed to need me. That sounds egotistical, doesn't it? But I could help her. She was homesick and longing for her own, and I had no very own. She interested me because she had so much love



in her life, — parents, brothers, and sisters, — and I seemed to understand how sad it was to be away from it all.”

“You’re a very generous girl, Helen, if you did that without love.”

“It seems to me there must be a kind of election in love, even in schoolgirl love. I have been trying to analyze it. I suppose it is the warm, vagrant fancy — it isn’t friendship. That certainly is founded on esteem, on the pleasure of companionship, on traits in another that are satisfying. I am afraid I am not an enthusiastic girl. I don’t want to wear trinkets or wraps or ribbons for the love of the girl who possesses them. I could lend out mine when they were needed, but it would not intensify my regard for the girl. Perhaps I have not the nature to fall wildly in love. But I do like a good, honest, steady, dependable friendship. Am I too commonplace? And, Lorraine, I like you very much indeed. I am glad to be your next neighbor.”

Lorraine flushed with pleasure.

“If I had been a freshman I should have felt jealous of Miss Trevor. We older girls



wondered a little — we thought you were so dissimilar. Leslie fancied she would be a great drain on you, but you were always so fresh and strong. I like strong people. I'm rather weak, myself. I have a longing to play ivy but I think it so silly. Oh, take off your hat and let us consider your room, and then hunt up your trunk! After that we will discourse learnedly on the difference between love and friendship."

Lorraine's room was very pretty, and had an individuality; she had not overloaded it with trumpery. There were a few fine engravings and photographs; her other pictures were in portfolios. The tea-table had some elegant china, the book-shelves a number of choice books, and there were two willow rockers, also two or three folding-chairs, in a corner. The window curtains were ruffled Swiss, but the floor rug was undeniably costly. It was a young girl's cosy room.

Helen laid her hat and wrap on the couch, feeling very much at home, for most of these adornments had been in Lorraine's other room. A pleasurable emotion seemed to stir her pulse



in a gentle manner; it was like coming to an old friend.

"You see we are on the easterly side, a trifle to the south. I like the morning sun."

"I had the sunset before."

"Oh, do you remember what Longfellow says: 'The setting of the sun is like the setting of a great hope.' I like to be out-of-doors where you can take in all its glory. There is nothing sad then. But when you watch it slowly creeping out of a room, you can't help thinking of the dying day, and it brings a sort of sad feeling."

"I never looked at it in quite that fashion," returned Helen, thoughtfully. "After all, it only goes round on the other side; some one else has it."

"But I have to say good-by to it. And the sunrise is joyous." Lorraine studied her a moment. "If you shouldn't care —"

"I shall like it. It will bring you to mind the first thing."

"I am so glad that we are real friends!"

They walked through to the other room. It



had the ordinary belongings, the study-table, the small set of book-shelves.

“I will help you arrange it. Let us send word about your trunk,” and she touched the electric button. “Then come and have a cup of tea, and we will talk over vacation.”

Helen watched the pretty deftness; Lorraine was a very graceful girl. She had developed a good deal in a year, grown taller, Helen thought, though she was still slim, but with a lithe sort of roundness.

“Well, about the vacation?” Helen asked.

“We had a seaside cottage on the Jersey shore with several friends near by. Just above us was a very stylish settlement. Mother wouldn’t hear to real society, but there were girls enough to have a good, gay time in the usual fashion. Then father had to take a business journey out in Pennsylvania, and I went with him — and inspected two mining towns. It was queer and weird and quite dreadful in some respects. I was really afraid to go down in a mine; you get so full of black dust. I’d like to write a novel about it, if I had genius enough. Then he took me up to Niagara,



which was splendid, of course, but look at photographs and read descriptions; I won't bore you. Next summer, if all is well, he will take me to Canada, if I go into the seniors."

"As you will, of course."

"Oh, I couldn't disappoint the dearest of fathers! And my brother Austin enters Yale. Father is great on education, and he has bound over Austin not to get engaged until he is through."

"Did he exact the same promise of you?" laughed Helen.

"Well — in a way. Mother looks out that I don't have any lovers. I'm not anxious. Oh, do you know that splendid Miss Bradshaw was married in Paris?"

A quick color mounted to the edge of Helen's hair.

"I had known her before at Aldred House, and just at the last she told me. It was all delightful. She came to college to escape another lover, and this one was truly of her election."

"Dear me! I wonder when we will be confiding our engagement to each other! I sup-



pose most girls hope to be married. That Miss Coultas — you remember the antiquarian — thought marriage spoiled a woman's career. But what if the woman doesn't want a career? I don't believe I do. I want a lot of happiness, and I suppose the best and sweetest comes through love. Victor Hugo says, 'Were there not some who loved, the sun would be extinguished.' But I do not think it will be in our time," laughing. "Does the tea suit? And those are delicious wafers. I have some bonbons that I haven't exhumed."

"I am not a great candy girl," remarked Helen.

"Are you not? Then there is a point of agreement. I couldn't eat fudge and caramels every night, and I don't like messing over them. What about your vacation?"

"I first visited my friend, Miss Craven, who was here at Commencement. She has a lovely country home. I studied mornings, and then we drove about, walked, made calls, had some guests, and went up to West Point, which was most entertaining."

"I do adore young military men. I wish



my brother had chosen that career, but he is wild on chemistry. And then where?"

"To Newburgh to see the curiosities and the historic old town, then a week spent in the Catskills, and afterward a fortnight spent in study. I am to have two examinations tomorrow. Suppose I shouldn't pass! What a fraud I'd be! Perhaps I'd better wait before putting the room in order. Oh, and I came near leaving out a week spent in the home of my childhood among friends and the only relatives I have left!"

"Why, it sounds — crowded full."

"It was," and a smile played about Helen's lips.

"And I've hosts of aunts and cousins. A number came down to visit us. Oh, you haven't any fear that you will not pass?"

"I am *quite* sure. You see, Professor Blake made me out a list, and a tough one at that. Unless I should get rattled —"

"But you seem a cool-headed girl. It was an immense compliment, let me tell you."

"I think I owe a good deal of it to Miss Morse, and to my father's reputation," re-



plied Helen, coloring with a variety of emotions. "But I have studied in strenuous earnest. I did not dream of skipping a year, but I will say last year was easy."

"And I know half a dozen girls who were eager for the prize. I wonder who will get it this year. There is a host of new freshmen."

The trunk came up. There was a bevy of girls in the hall congratulating her. It seemed indeed like going among old friends, although there had been few real approaches to friendship. But with true class *esprit* they were proud of her.

Helen unlocked her trunk and suit-case. There were pretty gowns to be shaken out and hung in the closet, dainty articles to be laid in the drawers, and a few pictures and flower vases to be put in place.

"This is my contribution," said Lorraine, unwrapping a picture. "You are so fond of Madonnas. And this is one of the modern ones, — the Sichel. I stood between that and the Gabriel Max. In one I like the mother's face, in the other, the child. But this is un-



deniably a young Jewish girl, and she looks as if she might have a presentiment of the coming years, and the child is just sweet, unconscious babyhood. I have one in my room at home."

"It is most gracious and lovely of you, and I hardly know how to thank you. Shall I tell you the story of my first Madonna?"

"Oh, do please!" Lorraine entreated. "I like to hear stories of happenings in people's lives, and you seem to have had no end of romances."

A flush and a smile wavered over Helen's face. After all, they were romances. Was not life full of them, only some seemed prosaic in the passing? And she related the incident of being sent over to Hope Centre to do errands for Aunt Jane when she was a little girl and she had first seen the Bodenhause Madonna in a window. "And then I really knew nothing about pictures. I was an ignorant little country girl," she added.

"I can't believe you were ever very ignorant — of yourself. Is that a paradox?" laughing. "There are people who understand



intuitively, and do not have to go to books for everything. The books are the helpers, of course. Then there are people, girls, who do not seem to take in anything until they have found it in a book. I'm just glad through and through that you are my neighbor. We shall have some nice talks this winter, and we shall be studying the same things. Two years! Think of it!"

Lorraine's face was alight with enthusiasm.

Helen wondered how she had come to be so well liked.

They presently had the room in order, and it looked quite cosy, though Helen admitted she would like a pile of cushions in the corner, but she strictly forbade Lorraine to give her any.

"You are a proud girl, Helen Grant, but some one says there is as much virtue in accepting a favor gracefully as in bestowing one. Write that down in Memory's copy-book." There was a mischievous glint in her eyes, as she turned them on Helen in a little triumph. "Now let us go out for a walk before we get into a dispute."



There was a crowd of girls around the entrance and on the steps of Garth Hall. Some of them rushed out and captured Helen. And there was Betty Garnier, her frock not quite long, and her hair still in a big braid behind, tied with a black ribbon, the girl who had won glory for the freshmen in the basket-ball contest.

"I think we sophs are going to beat the juniors next time," she laughed. "My brother gives me great credit for playing a fine game, and he has been putting me through such a course of study that *I* may skip a class. But it was an awful experience," and she made a wry face. "I'm really afraid much learning will make me mad, spoil my temper completely. Oh, why must we be continually scrambling up the tree of knowledge? Well, — a happy year to everybody," and she flashed off.

There, too, was complacent Bessie Cochran, bowing and smiling to everybody, and also numerous freshmen getting acquainted. All was stir and bustle, and there was much laughter among the older students, while some



girls stood solitary and uncertain. Helen felt moved to go to them, but just then she espied Miss Morse.

"Let us cross over and speak to her," said Helen. "She wrote me such a delightful letter!"

"You must not feel compelled to drag me everywhere, just because we are going to be neighbors," said Lorraine, mirthfully. "Only, I like Miss Morse, and shall be in some of her classes, as well."

Miss Morse saw then, and turned with a cordial greeting. Her eyes questioned Helen.

"Oh, I've been wrestling like a good soldier!" said Helen. "I do believe I am ready to go into battle to-morrow morning, hoping to keep my credit up, thanks to your interest. And Professor Blake was so good. He gave me the very hardest problems."

"That's a new way of putting goodness to the fore. I haven't had any doubt of you. And did you see your old friend, Mr. Walters?"

"I spent a delightful half-day with him, and he is so interested in your brother, and



longs to see him. And he hopes to make your acquaintance, also. I can't make that old time seem real — it appears as if it must have been in some other life."

“Old time! What will you say at thirty?” and a gleam of amusement crossed Miss Morse's rather grave face.

“So much has happened since then.”

“And much more to come. We look as if there would be a big freshman class this year, but it will have some left-overs in it. Every year girls seem more desirous to enter college. If they were only as ambitious to study! Still, a year of discipline has some results. What a glorious day it has been! Are you in the mood for a walk? I have been unpacking and settling until I feel absolutely stuffy, and long for a draught of this invigorating west wind.

They had a delightful ramble just in the edge of the wood, and left college lore quite behind them. Miss Morse's vacation had been very entertaining. “Only,” she explained, “my brother and I wished for some young people. Oddly enough, we have no nieces or



nephews nearer than Colorado. One sister, older than either of us, married, and went out there. She died and left three children, and her husband married again a very nice woman, who has none of her own, and is not willing to give any of them up. And my brother is very fond of children. When we come to live together we shall open an orphan asylum."

Helen told of Miss Craven's protégés, and interested Miss Morse very much.

"Your friend must have a very fine character," she said with enthusiasm. "I am glad she is one of the women who know how to use money wisely, and — yes — I am proud of her being a single woman and having her heart set on a home. Every year, enjoyable homes seem falling more into disuse. Even the rich have three or four that they only stay in a certain length of time, and can have no real home affection or delight. We have come largely to have mere staying-places. So I am glad to hear of some real home-makers in the world."

"You would like her, I am sure," said Helen, eagerly.



"I shall be glad to see her again, and I rejoice that you have such a friend."

Helen went to her examinations the next morning. Lorraine was waiting for her.

"Oh, it is all right!" she cried with joy. "I can tell it by your face."

Helen gave a gay little laugh.

"So you read faces easily. I shall have to be on the watch. There is one more, but if I had a condition, I could soon make it up."

"Let us go out and see the girls; Leslie is not here to welcome them. There have been several new appointments. I know well enough how to approach some girls, but I'm really awkward with others. And then I wonder if they will like me. That's self-seeking, I suppose," said Lorraine, with a half-smile.

"I believe it is nobler to rise superior to that, and think only of the duty. But it is inspiriting to be met half-way."

"And many girls are willing to come all the way and bestow themselves upon you in a wholesome fashion. Mother is always cautioning me against hasty friendships, but I liked you at once."



"Thank you." Helen squeezed her hand.

Girls were still coming in, many of them with a confident look, sure of their present standing. There were eager greetings; there were girls who stood apart, lonely; there were some mothers and elder sisters intent upon seeing their fledglings comfortably settled, and full of anxiety. Students came from the examinations with delight written on their countenances, but there was also fear and despondence.

What a little world it was! Helen studied it with a curious interest. How many of them really meant to do anything with life? Why should her thought recur to Juliet Craven and the lovely home that she might be an inmate of if she chose, a sister friend? Oh, was she weakening, losing her great ambitions, and longing for the roses and lilies of life?



## CHAPTER II

### OF FRIENDS AND FRIENDSHIP

BEING a junior was quite different, Helen found. She was not altogether sure she had acted wisely. She knew so many of the sophomores that she felt rather strange here. There were numbers of older girls who indulged in a rather patronizing air, although they considered her a credit, and it seemed almost as if they took the honor of her admittance, some way.

Well, — girls grew older, — that was it, and they did go through various phases. Sometimes, she was amazed at the changes in herself.

It was really delightful to have Lorraine for a neighbor. They liked the same pictures, and Lorraine had two portfolios of engravings and photographs that were always a joy to Helen, and they studied them together until



they could almost see the interiors of the grand old churches, and the galleries with their throngs of guests and their out-of-the-way nooks.

"I ought to be an artist," Lorraine declared. "I can't rave over *all* of the old masters, but I do see pictures that seem to charm my very heart out of me with a tender, longing pain. Yet, I can't draw at all. I can paint a flower from a pattern. Mother has quite a genius for painting flowers. I can write tolerable verses, but when I read Tennyson and Jean Ingelow and both of the Rossettis, I put mine in the fire. You will have to do some work this year for the *Miscellany*."

"It will be a dry-as-dust essay."

Both girls laughed.

"I oughtn't to be glad that you have no special genius, but I do feel a little relieved. We shall be more comfortable as friends. You may surpass me in studies or translations or anything that can be just learned, but I should envy a God-given genius."

"Yet, there are several," returned Helen. "And I learned yesterday that Miss Aymar,



who had the class poem, is going to have a volume of verses out for the holidays."

"Oh, she was a genius! But we were not friends. I was always a little afraid of her. Her eyes were forever looking into other worlds. Three of the seniors have gone abroad to study art. Can you recall that Miss Rosen, with flaxen hair and German blue eyes, who was so great on languages? She has a thousand dollars a year in a New York publishing house. Why, there were some famous girls in the seniors. Next year, we shall have to emulate them."

"We are not going to live that just now."

In a week or two the seething settled, and regular work began; regular pleasures, as well. There were out-of-door sports planned for the autumn, which came in with magnificent promise. There was the usual tea to the freshmen; there was the forming of societies and clubs.

Leslie Brooks returned in unobtrusive mourning. Her room was at the end of the corridor. The girls sympathized with her,



but no one knew the great burden that had been lifted from her. First, Laura Brooks had a long illness, a curious brain affection, which by slow degrees undermined her reason. She was some years older than Leslie, and had been almost a mother to her, and when the last flicker of reason expired, Leslie felt broken-hearted. That had been a year before, and up to that time Leslie had hoped against hope. The small patrimony of the elder had been spent in care for her, and during the last year Leslie and her brother, who had taken a business position, not very profitable at present, but in the way of advancement, had economized closely so that Laura should have the best of care and attention. Her physical health was of the most perfect until a sudden and dangerous illness intervened, when the bewildered brain awoke to its true heritage in the better land.

“I’m a senior now, to be sure,” she said to Helen, “but I want to see more of you this year. I shall have some leisure.” Yet, when she thought of the sad event that would in the future relieve her of much strenuous endeavor,



she wondered if she ought to take it thankfully.

“And I want you to join our Shakespeare class; you are such an excellent reader.”

“But — haven’t the juniors the first claim?”

“Oh, there will be enough left for them! You’ll have to go in for athletics or games. I do not see how you kept out of so much last year. But if you had taken it half in, you could never have skipped a class. Why that smile?” studying Helen with a sense of amusement.

“Not at my own smartness. I was thinking of Betty Garnier, and how she won the game for her class. She was a good student, too, and passed satisfactorily.”

“She and Bertha Strong will carry all before them. They’ve challenged your class already, so you will have to look to your laurels.”

“O dear, — there are so many things!” and a perplexed crease came in Helen’s forehead.

“You can’t do them all, and take in the



pleasures, too. The fun is the chicken and ham and salad in the sandwich, and the study is the dry bread, often yesterday's; the lessons that one had an awful qualm about and just squeezed through, resolving to be more thorough next time."

"Yet, there are many delightful things in college life. I'd like it to last ten years, if my money held out. You can forget for awhile what must come afterward."

"Miss Coultas stretches it along. She teaches, writes dry, statistical things, archæology and the like, hears of some new thing, and comes back for another course. She is assisting a learned professor in Columbia College with a history, and is not coming back until the second semester. She loves to acquire, but I think she misses many of the real delights of life. I like to walk through the autumn woods, just for the pure pleasure, to hear the leaves talk — wasn't it Burroughs who said that? And we ought to go out this minute. Let us find Lorraine Loree and take her along."

She was ready to go, but they paused to



see the sophomores and freshmen at a tennis game. Bessie Cochran was flying wildly about, spoiling more than she gained, but when a girl spoke sharply to her she put on an air of consequence.

"That girl has the most self-complacency I ever saw," commenced Lorraine. "I almost envy her — I should so like to have a high opinion of myself and my belongings and my family. But I can't help recalling the fact that there are hundreds of people, families, I mean, who are richer, who live in much more elegant style, who go abroad every year, who have pictures and bric-à-brac that mount up to the thousands, and that keeps me meek and lowly."

"You wouldn't want to be like her," protested Helen, energetically.

"No! oh, no!" and a half-comical shudder shook Lorraine. "Yet, I think these obtuse people do manage to get a great deal of pleasure out of life. I don't believe they wanted her in that tennis club, but she somehow slips in, just as she achieved the class presidency."

"Perhaps she persuades others, some, at



least, because she has such a confident belief in herself," returned Leslie. "I've seen that before. And, somehow, those people *do* succeed. They skip lightly over the boggy places where better-trained souls hesitate and flounder, and they do seem to find friends."

"It takes all sorts to make a world, I have heard," said Lorraine, sententiously. "Oh, girls, wouldn't it be funny if we were all alike, and all aiming at the same thing, and there was no variety! Why, if there was nothing we could dispute about — there would be no vim in an argument. Yet, some people complain that colleges destroy individuality, like the Homes for children who come to look all alike in gingham aprons — the inmates, I mean. The Homes have a little different aspect on the outside."

"It will not be in our time," returned Leslie. "But when you read some abstruse article on the waste of time of living in small families, of the sinful prodigality of cooking when you could have a concentrated tablet that would dissolve in your mouth and nourish you as you walk along, of the great caravansaries



where your bed is made by a machine, the rooms cleaned by compressed air, your clothes woven and sewed as if they fairly grew on your back — you wonder what there will be to do.”

“And the use of studying!”

They left the tennis court behind. Over yonder was the bicycle course, and there were some superb riders whizzing by. There was also the long, smooth track where girls were running and leaping over hurdles.

“That picture rouses a thought in my mind,” began Lorraine. “I saw you run several times in the spring, Helen, and you fairly flew, skimmed along, as if you hardly touched the ground. You were not all elbows and knees. And now you must do the juniors credit in something besides mere book-learning. Isn’t it Samantha Allen who says, ‘Every station house in life has its responsibilities?’”

“I learned to run when a little country girl,” laughed Helen. “And to climb trees and walk on fence-tops without tumbling.”

“Yet, you didn’t haunt the Gym much last



year. Father insists that I shall take up easy stunts. He believes in a sound body for a sound mind."

They turned out of the pleasure-ground and plunged into the strip of woods where the wind rustled softly and the sunshine sifted through the trees flecks that looked like gay butterflies chasing one another about. The soft, mossy turf was like a velvet carpet, with here and there a red leaf that had ripened and fallen. October had come in with a glorious haze of Indian summer, and a warmth that still kept late flowers in bloom. There were gorgeous beds of salvia and chrysanthemums of nearly every shade. A bed of old-fashioned marigolds, in thick velvety leaves and rich brownish yellows with every variety of marking, made a most effective show, and fairly dazzled in the sunshine.

"I wish you hadn't gone in the seniors," Lorraine began, regretfully. "We three would have made a delightful trio."

"Why can we not make it now?" asked Leslie.

"Well, — the studies are different, — the



ambitions, the results, the maturity of character and opinions."

"They do get sifted and winnowed in four years. Yet even the seniors have not all the wisdom; the professors stand above them," added Leslie, laughing.

"Oh, Helen! Did you keep in touch with that lovely senior who was going to Paris to be married?"

"Miss Bradshaw? Yes, I have had two letters from her, one just before she was married, and one much longer, written from Rome. She is very happy, and I am sure she deserves it."

"She was a fine girl," returned Leslie. "And I think I rejoice in every woman who marries judiciously and happily."

"Judiciously! Oh! Oh!"

"And why not?" returned Leslie with a rising flush. "I might have said wisely; that would not sound so heretical. But college training is supposed to give you a judicial mind. Do either of you recall Miss Wainwright, who had one of the essays on criminology, the prevention of it, I think, — I have



almost forgotten already, which speaks well for a college memory."

"Well, what of her? I thought she had a rather severe, judicial face. If she attained to judgeship, I shouldn't want to be the criminal. But I dare say you heard she is married to a young clerk, who parts his hair in the middle and lisps a little."

"No such thing, you flippant girl. She has entered a law office in New York and the classes at Columbia."

"Well, — I do not want to be a lawyer or a doctor. And I am not fitted for the clerical state, unless I should be asked to adorn some delightful young parson and his rectory. I have no ambition to teach, so I think I shall be a flower of the field. I like that better than being a lily-of-the-valley."

"The field is large and the flower has a mission," Leslie Brooks returned, gravely. Then she glanced at Helen with eyes that were more eloquent than words. Helen reached over and took her hand.

"Don't make me jealous!" cried Lorraine



with a laugh. "Let us emerge from this shady way and view the sunset."

It was gorgeous, indeed, and the air was full of resinous fragrance. Helen came across three belated daisies. They met groups of laughing girls enjoying the light-hearted pleasantness of college days, since they had left the real responsibilities in the academic halls; freshmen, sophomores, juniors meeting on equal ground. Helen enjoyed the picture they made. One and another spoke to her or held out a hand. Miss Van Duyne walked beside her.

"We are *so* disappointed. We meant you should be class president. I like the sophomore class wonderfully well, and I suppose I shall like the juniors still better. But when I get there you will have flown up to greater heights. We didn't have a very nice time last year, did we? And you were so devoted to your chum. She didn't come back. Don't you think it foolish for girls to come just one year?"

"She came because an aunt insisted upon sending her. And I think it was a good thing,





IT WAS GORGEOUS, INDEED! — Page 34.







too. She seems to have taken a higher standing in her town, is to teach school for two years, and then be married."

"Oh, then I do not wonder she did not want to return! I suppose she is very happy."

"She was essentially a home girl, one of a family who were very dear to each other. I think she will have a satisfactory life, with a great deal of real delight in it."

"I'm beginning to envy those two girls," nodding to Leslie and Lorraine. "Are you setting out to prove that three doesn't spoil friendship?"

"I do not think we have set out to prove anything. I liked them both last year, Miss Brooks was so kindly and considerate to the freshmen, and Miss Denman is simply charming."

"What do you suppose I told my mother? I told her that I had set my heart upon one girl friend for next year. And now I am out of the running."

"Why?" Helen turned her bright, mirthful eyes upon her.

"Oh, there are so many to care for you!



Girl friendship is laughed about, yet my mother's dearest friend was her mate at boarding-school. She was mother's bridesmaid. She has four children; we have five. One year mother visits her, the next summer Mrs. Colmer comes to us. We children all like her so much. It is a sort of ideal friendship. I'd like the same thing to happen to me."

"Some writer says, friendship is a grand and august thing, and puts it on a higher plane than love. I think there is a good deal of it in the world."

"I'd like a good deal of it to come my way."

How much had come her way, Helen thought, and wondered at it. Lorraine stood waiting for her. Miss Van Duyne took her hand from Helen's arm and went her way.

"They ought to have taken that girl for class president," Lorraine said. "She has a style about her that carries weight. However, they have done very well, it is supposed. Isn't it odd how soon the dark falls down? A moment ago the sky was resplendent in vividness."



"It's turned a little cloudy. That gray mass has been drifting over from the east. I fancy we shall have rain to-morrow."

"Oh, and the crowd was to go chestnutting!"

"There has been hardly frost enough yet."

"Oh, you country girl! I do believe you know the times and seasons for everything to grow and ripen. Oh, the supper smells good, doesn't it? There is an aroma of warm gingerbread in the air. It will taste better than ten angel cakes."

"I think you would be surfeited on the eighth," returned Helen, laughingly.

And surely it did rain the next day. Many of the more heroic went out for their constitutional, but others loitered in the various rooms planning, telling jokes, and chaffing one another. The social aspect was very fascinating to Helen; she had not taken in much of it last year. There were some merry girls in the juniors flinging quotations at each other and giving wrong authors. Miss Hendricks was prefacing her knowledgeable facts with, "When I was at Leipsic," or "When we were



going through the Escorial, at such a point was this splendid picture," which she could describe accurately.

"How much she must have travelled," Helen said with a sigh of half-envy.

Lorraine laughed. "Why, she has never crossed the ocean."

"Then it isn't —" true, Helen was about to say, but checked herself and stared at Lorraine.

"The girls all know, but when they want some point elucidated — the picture in some church in Belgium, a statue at Florence, a bit about the Moors in Spain — they appeal to her at once. She is an insatiable reader, and packs these things in her memory. I think it came about when old Professor Whiting was here at Commencement two years ago and she was a freshman. He was listening to a vivid description of boating on the Thames, and said, 'My dear young lady, how delightful it is to meet a spectator of such a scene.' Of course she explained; she is as truthful as most girls, and really doesn't sail under false colors in ordinary things. But we all think this rather



funny. I've seen her entertain a crowd of girls a whole evening."

"Why doesn't she write stories, if she has so much imagination?"

"Oh, that's the queer thing! People, especially girls, are a curious conglomerate. She can't write an exercise worth a pin, while she can do a fine translation. She declares the instant she puts pen to paper everything goes out of her head. Her Latin verses are terrible. She has a chum who takes down a talk in a kind of shorthand, and then she writes it over. She ought to keep a secretary, but I don't know that it would be admissible."

"She might make a good lecturer."

"An admirable one. She really sees the things she reads, and she identifies herself with them."

"It's a curious gift, anyhow."

"Oh, you must go to the Schubert this evening! They want you to join. You ought to give your class the pleasure of your voice."

"And the Shakespeare Club, the Early English Club, the Emerson, and athletics and teas and plays. Where is the time for study?"



"And you are down for an article in the *Miscellany* for next month. Don't forget that."

Helen sighed.

There was a sudden rush through the corridor, and the door was pushed wider open. A bevy of girls, fairly tumbling over each other, stormed an entrance.

"We've just hit it!" exclaimed the foremost girl, whose flaxen hair was always tumbling about in a tendency to curl, and who would have been quite striking had her eyebrows and lashes been darker. "And we want every junior to join. There were some pretty severe strictures on last year's Hallowe'en, as you all know. It was carried to excess. It was disgraceful, fit only for a lot of rough boys! We're going to change the aspect of the revel."

"I am with you there. I shouldn't train in such horse-play again," said Lorraine, rising. "I'd ask you to sit down" — and she glanced hesitatingly around.

"A cushion, or a corner, or even the middle of the floor," interrupted some one.



“The spokesman must have that.”

“But it wasn’t altogether Louise’s idea.”

“We all had a hand or a tongue in it. Like a snowball, it kept rolling through a field of bright thoughts —”

“Mixed metaphor! And you the club critic!”

“Hush! Let me get the subject in hand.”

“I am waiting serenely,” said Lorraine.

“Well, it is this —”

“Don’t claim it as your idea, now.”

“I’m not going to. Don’t worry. Worry is the destroyer of youth, the bane of age. It is to come from the whole class, if they will join and take an interest. The idea is to give the sophs and freshies a ball instead of an out-of-door tantarara, and to have it real rustic, with sunbonnets and checked aprons and half-a-century-old gowns, if there are such things, — if not, make them of furniture calico, — and a country supper, pancakes, beans, roast pork, etc., etc.”

“Why, I think it will be just splendid!”



declared Lorraine. "Everybody will join, I am sure."

"We want you to go with us to interview Miss Brooks and Miss Dana. Get them on our side, and we are all right. We can count on you, Miss Grant?"

"Oh, yes!" assented Helen with a bright smile.

"We have interviewed Miss Castle, and we can have the gymnasium. Dan will take down the apparatus and put it up again. Polly Munson will look after the eatables. Oh, we have it all down to a fine point, if we can get enough girls to chip in for expenses!"

"But to feed such a crowd!"

"Oh, they will have had their dinners! And it will be the fun, and not the feeding. Come, Miss Denman and Miss Grant."

Miss Holmes, next door, had out her card, "Engaged," but they knocked boldly.

"Yes, I'll be glad to come if some one will help me through this trig afterward. It's tougher than a hemlock knot."

"I will," assented Helen.

"I wanted to come and ask you, but I



hadn't the courage. What a well-regulated brain you have, while mine is of the sieve order," and she squeezed Helen's hand as they went to make the rounds.



## CHAPTER III

### THE FUN OF IT ALL

It was really better that the time was limited, and they adhered to the simplest plans. It was to be a truly country affair, rather backwoodsy. The gymnasium was trimmed with oak branches, interspersed with evergreen. Some one had unearthed great trails of "bread and butter," with its shining leaves hardly touched by frost. Paper flowers lent color and looked very natural, especially the great chrysanthemums.

There had been a little demur among some of the sophomores who had planned to play numerous tricks on the younger class. But dances always were delightful.

At one end of the gymnasium, planks were spread on trestles for the refreshments, and covered with pretty Japanese paper tablecloths. Eight was the hour to begin, but before



that a motley crowd began to gather, the grotesque costumes being nearly as puzzling as a masquerade. Hair was arranged in all sorts of ways, from the tight little knob to the ornate pile surmounted by a grandmother's comb. Sunbonnets were not wanting, and a few very old-fashioned scoop bonnets, two or three with long green veils hanging far down the back, were also seen. Prim bunches of gray curls peeped out of marvellous caps, short frocks with baby waists and great puffed sleeves, pointed waists with a high ruff about the neck, and some skirts distended about the hips by a hoop and falling in straight, full lines, were worn.

"My great-grandmother's wedding-gown was made just this way. It was of pink and white brocade. My grandmother wore it as well. Mother has it packed away in a trunk, and I dare say it will come around in style again," explained the wearer.

There were farmer lads, with hair rolled under suspiciously, and smooth faces betokening their youth, in rough blue jeans or more sober brown. One comparatively tall youth



sported a blue cloth dress coat with gilt buttons and a ruffled shirt-front, hair tied in a queue, and dancing-pumps with immense silver buckles.

"That's Carol Saybrook," whispered a girl. "My! doesn't she make a splendid young fellow! Everybody will be crazy to dance with her."

The colored band struck up some old-fashioned tune, for the first quadrille. They had ransacked all the old music-books to make out their programme. One of their number called off, waving a baton vigorously. The merriment was infectious. Cheeks grew rosy, neckties seemed to lose their serene adjustment, and they were of many garish hues. Masculines looked sheepishly at sweethearts and held fair hands in mimic adoration, stole off in a corner and shelled peanuts for the fair one, or took her to the lemonade-can and treated her, making a pretense of hunting up change in a great leathern wallet. What jigs were danced! Sailors' hornpipe! Highland fling! and a merry crew they were.

Miss Saybrook was certainly the beau of



the evening. Girls were brave enough to besiege her just for "two or three turns," and more than one was vexed at being refused.

She drifted around to Helen, who was in a faded blue gown and pigtails, and who had insisted on some wallflowers being rescued.

"I'm trying to get around," she said in a rather drawling tone, though it always had a broad, soft accent. "But what is one among so many? Well, — we were freshmen once, but it seems as if every year they need being salted down more than once."

"And we grow wiser with the experience, I suppose," Helen returned, smilingly.

"But they consider themselves quite superior at first. I'm glad I had no adoring family to set me up on a pinnacle and believe the very sun rose just on purpose to light my superior brain. And so I wasn't much disappointed; I aimed at no wonderful heights."

"I suppose girls come to college from a great variety of motives," Helen ventured. Miss Saybrook appeared rather cynical.

"Well, it seems to me most of them have an idea that they will soon distinguish them-



selves. Very few do. Women, for the most part, are about on an average. The conceit gets rubbed out after a while, and they find the level of the hundred and one. But I forgot — you were not the average girl. You were very modest over your last year's triumphs."

"They surprised me as much as any one. I really had no thought of either," and Helen flushed warmly.

"Did you come with a well-defined motive? Oh, let us walk about and skip that quadrille! It is one I don't like, the basket part, perhaps because I am so tall. I hate to be thumped on the head."

"But you wouldn't be."

"Oh, I forgot my part!" laughing.

"You take it admirably." With very honest appreciation.

"I've done it so many times. I'm cast for the men's parts always. I suppose I should have been one. But I should hate business, and I fancy every woman does, whether she is willing to admit it or not. What are you going in for, a Ph. D. and a professorship?"

"Not immediately."



"I suppose your people were very proud of you," Miss Saybrook said with a peculiar accent that somehow touched Helen. It seemed to have a longing in it.

"I haven't any near folks. I have only a few relatives and some friends."

"Perhaps you are just as well off. And I suppose you have income enough to follow your own sweet will."

"When my will doesn't desire too much."

"Oh! Wasn't your father some sort of high light? But they never get rich. Very few people *earn* a fortune. It seems to come by pure blind luck, or you marry for it."

"I must earn mine," Helen announced with a touch of pride. She would not sail under false colors. There was a general impression that Miss Carol Saybrook had about everything she wanted. Certainly, her attire was of the expensive kind.

"Perhaps it isn't wise to come to college when you have to marry for it, though five of the last year's seniors married almost at once."

The music stopped with a quick, sharp bang, as if the instruments had exploded. The



long table was uncovered. Girls with caps and aprons began to run up and down. There was pushing and crowding and laughing. The refreshments were not all beans and pumpkin pie; some of the delicacies dear to the heart of girls had been smuggled in. Even the psuedo-masculines forgot their sweethearts in their eagerness not to lose a share of the feast. The appetites of all were amazing, and before everything had been demolished, the clock struck twelve.

“O dear! O dear!” was heard with prolonged wails, for though they might continue orgies to the wee sma’ hours in the sanctity of their own rooms, midnight quenched public entertainments. There was a scrambling for the last of the olives, the nuts and grapes and doughnuts. The lights began to glimmer and dropped out.

“It’s lucky we planned to have some one come early in the morning and look after the débris, for we have had fun up to the last minute. I never had a better time in my life, and you couldn’t guess who the beaux were at first. I never mistrusted Addie North, she



gave her voice such a masculine sound. O dear, I should have liked it to go on until morning! I'm not a bit sleepy."

"The lights are fled, the garlands dead,  
The dancing-hall deserted,"

travestied another as they scurried through the dimly lighted corridors, but there were half-smothered laughs coming through the transoms.

"It wasn't so bad as last year!" declared one of a group of girls, who were the next day disporting themselves on the dry turf bordering the tennis court, "Why! nearly all the F's and S's were in disgrace. I studied the evening before and ran over things in the morning; I knew we'd be full of our fine togs all the afternoon. And the horrid ghost-stories last year! Ugh! it makes me shiver now! And Carrie Dane's fright! Isn't it funny that we do the same things year in and year out, and we do not believe in them, either?"

"Why are we so eager to look into the future? If it is good, we hardly dare believe it; if it isn't good, we do not believe it at all. And it is better fun just living along to see



what will turn up next. Anyway, you can't help, nor hinder."

"But if you knew of an unfortunate thing, you would avoid it."

"Oh, we don't always!" laughed some one. "We do know certain consequences."

"Well, I want some fun sandwiched in with my weighty knowledge, and we did have it last evening. But I just escaped by the skin of my teeth, or by sheer good luck, as a question came to me that I *did* know. Well, a miss is as good as a mile in some cases.

"Girls, what's next on the carpet? There's Thanksgiving, and the seniors are to give a farce, strictly original, the work of three master minds. And nothing between! How shall we exist!"

"Nothing! Why, there's chestnutting and two or three ball games and the races! Nothing indeed!" Scornfully.

"Well, those have been talked over and over. A right spandy new thing that will excite us all and have just enough uncertainty to keep us wondering —"

"There's enough uncertainty as to how you



are going to stand at the close of the semester. I don't want any more; we're crowded full now. Some day our minds will burst with the striving after the unattainable, or the unknowable, or the unrememberable."

There was a general laugh at that. Sadie Connor was always dipping into queer things and finding out reasons, and then combating them. They suddenly dropped into silence, as a great flock of belated birds were winging their way across the sky of peerless blue. The lawn and oval were full of drifting shadows, as the tall trees waved their branches and shook down yellow leaves that were like dainty birds running over the green turf. Far away fields and hills bathed in softened sunlight; a road wound round in the distance; there was a stillness that could be felt.

"If I had my camera —" began Gertie Hamilton, advancing toward them. "You are posed like the nymphs in some Grecian grove. What a waste of good material! I envy you the peaceful mood. I've just been having a tearing discussion with Jane Ferris on our future President."



"Of college or class or club?" asked a voice in a lazy tone. "None of them is worth tearing to tatters, for you do not know who they will be next year."

"The President of the whole country, child. College women should take an interest in politics since suffrage is making some advance. We may be called upon to vote."

"Our convictions will be settled by our fathers and brothers and lovers. Why should we worry about that?"

"Then it is time we cultivated minds of our own. We may not have husbands to enlighten us, poor single sisteren."

"A woman is supposed to be incapable of understanding the broad questions of political life —"

"She isn't." A tall girl, with a great crown of bronze hair and shining hazel eyes that when she was moved deeply radiated golden lights, sprang up with alertness, her voice ringing. "We have an interest. We have been studying some of the points in political economy, taxation, the tariff —"

"And the Monroe Doctrine; whether we



shall keep the Philippines and allow the Sultan of Sulu — is Sulu a country, or only an operetta? — to have as many wives as he pleases,” interrupted another.

“Certainly, you would hardly be able to take an intelligent view of politics,” declared the first speaker, bitingly.

“What did Miss Ferris say? She has opinions,” and a girl laughed merrily.

“And she is a radical, a Democrat, without endorsing her party. She believes in intellectual independence, if there is such a thing.”

“But don’t you think the independence a really noble thing? Our party, right or wrong, seems very partisan to me.”

“I should want to vote for the best man, irrespective of party.”

“But a good man might have some very erroneous ideas.”

“Query: Could a thoroughly good man espouse a bad cause, act on a wrong principle?”

“History is full of such incidents. They may have thought themselves right. ‘And to him that thinketh, so it is.’ I know that isn’t



just right. I like Beatrice's reason better — 'I think it so because I think it so.' There you have a woman's philosophy in a nutshell."

"We might make that an excuse for everything we want to do without regard for our neighbor's rights."

"Girls, the dew is beginning to fall, and some of you have no wraps. I think we had better have a run about, and meet again this evening to form a club that is evenly balanced. Both sides shall be heard in argument, and we can discuss the chief points of both parties. We'll put Miss Ferris at the head of the Democratic side, but how will we make a choice among the bright and shining Republican lights?"

"Applause!" shouted some one, and there was a general clapping of hands.

"Three cheers for the best man, — no, — I mean woman!"

The air rang with a merry hurrah; then they indulged in the college yell. The sun had dropped down behind the range of hills that were now purple-black with a glowing aureola on their summits. There was a slight chill in



the air, and several of the group began to run.

"What do you think of the plan?" Lorraine asked Miss Brooks. "Have you any politics?"

"Yes. Republican. And I feel quite certain the election will go that way. But it will be a very good thing if we can keep our tempers. And you know we have been going over some financial problems. Women really ought to take more interest in these things. And you, Miss Grant?"

Helen gave a short laugh. "I think Hope Township was generally Republican and strong on the tariff question. Are politics a matter of inheritance?"

"I do believe they are mostly. I follow in the footsteps of my family, I confess."

"I haven't any politics," Lorraine admitted rather ruefully.

"Then you will do for an umpire. And on our side we will elect Gertie Hamilton. She is humorous and can keep her temper. Her father has had two terms as a representative."

"And Lois Taylor. There ought to be



at least six on a side. Oh, look at the windows!"

The lights flashed in long rows like a small city illuminated. Girls were huddling in the doorways, and quite a procession wound round the oval.

"Oh, the warmth feels good, doesn't it!" and Lorraine shivered out the cold with a bright laugh. "Let us run to the parlor until we hear the welcome sound of the dinner-bell."

"I'm going to hunt up some girls and exploit the idea of a discussion. I want to see how many are interested. And we can meet in the Gym."

Leslie Brooks hurried away. She was very fond of the junior girls, and Miss Hamilton was, as she expressed it, quite eager for the fray. She mentioned several others that she called strong and level-headed girls.

Lorraine and Helen dropped on a divan that some one had rolled up to get the benefit of the cheery blaze, although it was warm enough anywhere about the large room. Some of the girls were reading, and small groups were



having animated discussions. Miss Ferris, a good student, although she had some peculiarities, sat quite by herself. She disliked to echo commonly received opinions, and always found a loophole of dissent; a sort of protest against what she called arbitrary rules that were not needed out of childhood, since self-government was the order of the college. Before entering any contest, she went over all the arguments pro and con that she might not be caught napping. Her face showed rather severe lines, as if it had always been turned to the serious side of life and despised frivolity.

Lorraine had been studying her. She was not analytical and believed strongly in intuition, though she had no fancy for weak characters. She mentally decided that Gertie Hamilton would win in the argument.

Helen's thoughts went back to Uncle Jason, who seldom talked politics, but labored under the impression that every Democratic administration had nearly ruined the country. And then the latest letter from Willard Bell flashed across her mind. The excitement of the coming election pervading New York had roused



him, and as he was to put in his first vote he was all eager interest. She had really enjoyed it, since it was not filled with appeals to her. Willard and his father were to come to New York for the winter. Mrs. Bell was to go to Bermuda to Daisy, who somehow did not get as strong as they had hoped. For a while she had enjoyed her companion very much, and written one glowing note that Helen had smiled over, that would have wounded her if she had loved Daisy deeply. She was glad for Willard to have a new interest, even if it was only temporary. There could be no Christmas invitation to the Bells', and that relieved her.

Just as the summons to dinner came, one of the seniors approached Miss Ferris and walked out with her through the corridor.

"Yes," she said, "yes, I will be there. Nine o'clock, sharp."

A matter like this was soon buzzed about. Most of the girls took it in the sense of amusement, but a few fell into arguments. It was history night after chapel, but the gymnasium began to fill up promptly. It presented



quite a different aspect from the previous evening; the bars and trestles and rowing-machines were in place, and the end was shrouded in duskiness. Several girls were seated at a long table; the others crowded about, eager to learn what was to be done. After the preliminaries were through, the chairman announced the purpose of the meeting. Six girls were to be appointed on the Democratic side, six on the Republican, and each was to bring forward the most cogent arguments for her side. The leaders were to be Miss Hamilton and Miss Ferris. The debate would occupy two evenings, six speakers each night. Everybody in favor of this was requested to vote. The ayes were uproarious; not a dissenting voice. They were to consider the remaining speakers, and vote on them Saturday afternoon. Each side was to select its strongest girl, and each girl to take up one of the most prominent points of her party.

The meeting on Saturday was wildly enthusiastic. There had been much electioneering during the three days, though on the first ballot there was considerable scattering.



Professor Bowne, who was a pronounced suffragist, and several of the other teachers were present.

"I really must congratulate you upon the order of your meeting," Miss Bowne said, graciously. "College training is beginning to show in several ways. It would be possible to educate women politically, in spite of the sneers and slurs that are often flung out. They need a good groundwork to know where they stand and why this foundation is more secure than any other."

There was a sudden interest in congressional reports, in the books on finance, trade, taxation.

"There's such a little time that all you girls must send in whatever fact you find; anything from Carey and Porter and Calhoun and Mr. Gladstone and John Mill and some of our own senators, whatever makes for my side, which is free trade and lower taxation, and whatever interferes with freedom of industry and the best markets. Let us get our first debate in order, before we go at the second. That will be on the night the question



is settled," and the speaker laughed. "We shall not hear in some days unless it is a rousing victory for our side."

"Girls, we ought to have an illumination and a procession for the side that wins. Are any of us brave enough to interview the president?"

They looked at each other in consternation at first.

"I think that would take more courage than going to the polls and dropping in a vote," said one of the seniors.

"Courage to meet an emergency is one of the first steps toward our emancipation," declared Miss Bowne. "But if you will empower me, I will present the case in your behalf."

"A committee of the juniors should go," said Miss Ferris with decision.

"Oh, no! Miss Bowne! Miss Bowne!" cried a host of voices.

Miss Ferris straightened herself and looked displeased.

"We have the best-looking leader," whispered Miss Brooks. "And it has been said



that women would vote for the handsomest candidate irrespective of merit, which is a libel, of course; we have more principle."

"Miss Ferris wouldn't," Helen said, decisively.

"It would depend on whether her party put him up. Still it would be a sort of bitter pill. She is thoroughly honest in her beliefs."

"One's beliefs may not always be right."

That was true enough, Helen thought.



## CHAPTER IV

### A POLITICAL DISCUSSION

For a proposal beginning in jest, the plan of the discussion created a wonderful interest. The lecture-room was offered to the juniors, and the plan of the procession approved of under certain restrictions. There was to be no undue triumphing over the losing side.

There was a throng going to the lecture-room on Saturday. The tennis meet had been in the morning; also the botany club. Girls dressed in holiday attire to do credit to "our class." There was also a sprinkling of seniors and a number of under classmen, women rather. It quite appalled the committee.

The chairman announced the purpose of the meeting and introduced the first speaker, Miss Ferris, who glanced calmly about the audience, seeming in no wise disturbed by the familiar faces of teachers. Her black gown was just



relieved at throat and wrists with a line of white. She was statuesque rather than stiff, and so thoroughly convinced of her own arguments that there was not the slightest hesitation in explaining what her party had done for the country since its earliest infancy, and what policies the present candidate had proposed to carry out to the great advancement along lines of certain prosperity. Every woman had an interest in this, wives, mothers, young women in training for the duties of life. She had a clear, decisive voice, and there was no hesitancy in her manner. Her words were well chosen, her arguments were clear as far as they went, and her air of earnest conviction made them apparently cover the ground.

Miss Hamilton was more sprightly, and brought to the fore an inspiring air of patriotism. She, too, had her tale of hard-won victories to recount, of what the party had saved the country from, of its glowing aims for the future, and she moved her audience to applause.

Then followed schemes of taxation, one flatly contradicting the other, and both mak-



ing points and dropping into fallacies. Plans of other nations in raising revenue were exploited, and the discussion closed amid great applause.

"But I do not think you were as convincing as you might have been, Gertie. I wanted Miss Ferris routed altogether."

"The truth lies between two extremes," she returned, sententiously. "I'm saving up some of my ammunition to the last. Oh, you'll be amazed at Miss Corsen's protective tariff arguments! She goes way back to the times of Greece and quotes Aristophanes, who satirizes the Achanians, who, because they burned charcoal, were not ready to have free trade forced upon them by war. It's simply immense. And old Carthage was strong for protection."

"Well, but oughtn't countries, like individuals, to improve? Don't we know more than those old Carthaginians? I always feel mad at them because they treated Hannibal so at the last."

"But our difference is between M. and N. Which will make the better President?"



"The man with the better party back of him. After all, Congress is the great thing."

"The Democratic party upheld slavery, anyhow. I can say it outside," and the speaker's cheeks turned very red. "I wouldn't be a —"

"Hush! You know we were to taboo personalities, and slavery, and the Civil War. It is just the politics of to-day."

"But I want the whole truth told. I thought of some telling points Miss Hamilton might have made. Men don't scruple to say things, and see what scathing articles are in the newspapers."

"*We* are going to put politics on a new basis, a cleaner, more generous foundation. It is to be principles, not men."

"Not a man!" cried some one in a whimsical tone. "The women are to get the fat offices."

"They won't know how to fill them. They can't rise to heights of political consideration."

"Why, they are doing it out in the new States, and no great cataclysm has occurred."

"Women are essentially narrow."



“College education is to broaden them out.”

“I don’t care about the broadening. Women will be Democrats and Republicans, and so long as my party beats, I shall be satisfied. Oh, girls, to think election is only a week and two days off! It makes me tremble to think of it!”

“A specimen of the new woman!”

“Well, I don’t care to be an old woman just yet. And the large-minded, public-spirited men are saying and printing all sorts of slanders about each other.”

“Will they pick the women candidates to pieces that way, and rake up all the silly and wrong things their fathers and grandfathers did? If so, I am not for women’s suffrage.”

There were lessons and exercises to think about; the Christmas exams would come so soon afterward. But there was a distracting interest in the great contest now that they were warmed up, and they said sharp and satirical things to each other, some quoting from the papers of the day. It was rather consoling to pay off some old scores under this cover.

Their second line of argument was listened



to with much attention and applause. If anything, the tariff speakers made the best showing.

"And now the great question is settled," they said as they wended their way to their rooms, inviting compeers in to partake of tea and various refreshments, and talk it over. The little parties happily were mostly of the same belief, so they were the more amicable.

Everybody made a rush for the papers the next morning. There was the glowing headline: GREAT REPUBLICAN VICTORY ASSURED. A shout went up; more than half of the juniors came from Republican families.

Miss Ferris took the defeat of her party with great calmness. "The right often fails," she said with a sort of grand composure, "but it wins in the end."

"My idea is that one party isn't so very much nearer right than the other, and it seems there must always be two parties."

"I hope it will not be a bad experience for you girls," said Miss Morse. "I consider it a good thing, for it has set you to looking up some truths about your country and the



methods and policies that come home to you in a different manner than from the mere study of text-books. I was afraid at first it might create some disturbance, but you all deserve much credit. Perhaps politics for women may not be such an impossibility. Now, for the next four years, you must follow the politics of your party and its chief men and see how near they come to the campaign promises."

There was great rejoicing. The winning party had their procession. They had worked upon transparencies, they had borrowed flags, even from their less successful neighbors. There was a band with numerous fifes and several horns, with mouthpieces and even two large jew's-harps, very well played, triangles, and a tambourine. Every patriotic girl placed a light, and some several, in her window. All the college buildings were illuminated, and it was an inspiring sight, for the successful candidate was a man of the highest integrity and irreproachable morals, worthy of the esteem of the whole country.

Although Miss Ferris took her defeat



calmly, there was no light in her window, and she did not even view the merrymaking, but sat in her room and studied.

"One party always has to lose," said the spokesman of a group of girls, philosophically. "And it would be queer if we were mad at the other party when we lose at any of the games."

"But there isn't any real principle involved in that; only honesty and fair play."

"Well, I think honesty a big principle. And now I'm going in for the fun of the procession. It won't do the defeated party any good for a few college girls to sit and mope and chew the cud of bitter reflection or disappointment."

"The country has always been going to ruin under every change of administration; yet, it holds up its head and goes on prospering, and I notice the men who have said bitter things and the men who have been berated are friends afterward," said Miss Hamilton. "Few of the dire predictions materialize. And we must remember the safeguard of having two parties."



"But where a king or emperor rules —" suggested a listener.

"Except in autocratic Russia or a government like Turkey, you will find two parties."

"Why, yes. Look at the House of Commons and the French and the Germans, and how the minorities make their power felt after awhile. But we must get ready to process.

"Light your lanterns, beat your drums,  
We have done the greatest sums."

"We!" exclaimed a girl, scornfully.  
"Wait until *we* have suffrage!"

"I'm not going to wait for anything so far off. I'll take my fun now, and then, too, if there is any to be had."

They lighted the transparencies and lanterns and marched around all the halls and several of the buildings, responding to cheers and cheering wildly themselves. They marched out to the president's residence, and although it was a rather crisp autumn night, the broad piazza was filled with professors, post-graduates, and not a few of the seniors.

As they paused in excellent order, being on their best behavior as representative college



girls, the president stepped forward and gave them a little speech, quite complimentary, rejoicing with them on the success of their candidate, as well as that of the majority of the country. Then the wildest of cheers went up, and they filed slowly by.

"It's been great fun all the way through," said Betty Garnier. "If this is a taste of politics, I don't wonder the men like a whole meal of it when they win the right to the feast. But I want to go in and hug a steam-pipe and have some hot chocolate. It's been heavenly weather, though; the most beautiful autumn I have ever seen. And, girls, if it will only be nice until Saturday!"

"Why, we want Saturday as well. I've been tackling the second hurdle and have it about perfect. And, Helen Grant, you are in the races. You'll have to look sharp, too."

"A run to bed would be most comforting to me," was the laughing reply.

"But you must stop and get good and warm."

They huddled over radiators, laughing and jesting. There was a fragrance of tea and



chocolate and toasting crackers. The largest rooms were taking in the feasters, who sat almost on each other's knees and filled the floor.

Helen had been very much occupied all day, and now, tired and sleepy, she tumbled into bed. She could not go over her lessons now; she must rise early the next morning, was her last conscious thought.

She was enjoying college life so much among the juniors. The crudenesses of girlhood had been toned down by new experiences and wider knowledge. There was more ambition; there was a pervading pride in the honor of the college; there was more intellectual stimulus in the pleasant routine of study and diversion, and in the social intercourse. For various reasons she had not joined in this last so much in her freshman year; she had a more vivid general interest, and a finer degree of appreciation. She would find a quality she admired in a girl who might be quite deficient in some other line, and yet she liked her, and was glad to be liked in turn. She and Lorraine were very warm friends.



Helen slept late the next morning and had barely time to glance over the earliest lessons. There were some bad breaks in the classes, but no one seemed to take them deeply to heart. She spent her noontime going over some exercises with Lorraine, who seemed rather languid.

"How generous you are," the girl said, reaching over and leaning lightly on Helen's shoulder. "I hope I shall never bore you with my shortcomings. I wish I had your certainty about everything. Other girls are confident; you are sure."

"But I study to be sure. My heart was up in my throat this morning. I really think I should have missed if some points had been demanded of me."

The afternoon was all excitement again. Saturday was really a junior field-day, the last of the season, and there were plans to discuss and various matters to settle. Girls were exercising, and the one anxious hope of all was that there would be no rain on Saturday.

"We can't count on this weather, for we have had such a bountiful supply of it. And



then, girls, Thanksgiving and skating and snow and Christmas!"

"And tests and worries as to how one stands. I wish we were back in October."

"I'm ready for Christmas any time," laughed a light-hearted girl. "I don't count on getting into the seniors. There's no hurry for me to get through."

Helen had taken a decided fancy to athletics, while in her first year the gymnasium had rather bored her. She knew now it was more the class of girls than real lack of interest in the exercise. She had protested at first, however, at being put on any of the lists, since there were sophomores who had done meritorious work.

All was eagerness to catch the first glimpse of the morning. There were long level bars of light with a few clouds drifting about, then a hazy dull-gold sun still suggestive of Indian summer appeared. Feet scampered up and down the corridor; there were bangs at doors that could only be made with the heel of a shoe in a determined hand. Yes, it would be a day made to order.



"Take a good stout breakfast to fortify yourself," advised more than one to the athletes.

Spectators began to gather and occupy the seats in the long rectangle, friends of the near-by pupils. A rope was extended along the track to reserve plenty of room, but eager faces pressed closely up to it. Each girl had her warm adherents, and a committee had prepared prizes for the winners.

There was some fine vaulting, and the running jumps were very well executed. Only two stumbled and failed to recover promptly. There was a burst of clapping and applause that fairly rent the air, but two were so evenly matched that it was hard to distinguish the winner.

There was a breathing space for the audience, and guesses ran round as to who would be best at the hurdles. Several fell out at the third one, more at the fourth, and there was only one, who was greeted with immense applause, at the finish. Then all eyes were turned to the girls in their blue suits with



white trimmings, ready for the starter's signal.

They were off like a flash, at first in a straight line across, scarcely swerving, skimming lightly along, two of them using some unnecessary vigor and growing rosy every minute. All eyes were eagerly turned on them, for none of them seemed to gain any advantage. They had made more than half the distance when the first one lagged a little. The others were cheered on by a burst of applause.

"Ada Foster will win, of course. She made a minute on the record yesterday, and you know she won for the sophomores in the tests with last year's juniors. Miss Grant goes splendidly. Now it lies between them."

The second girl had lost a few paces and was swinging her arms like a windmill in the desire for recovery. The third point was passed. Helen, of course, desired to do credit to her coterie of friends, who had been so insistent that she should enter, but she had hardly hoped to win. She heard her companion's step lag a trifle, and her breathing was more strenuous. How many times back in



Hope she had run races with the boys and beaten some of the best of them! She heard Aunt Jane's voice again in its ungraciousness, "Oh, yes, if you'd go about the work as you do running with the boys, it would be worth while!"

Faster! faster! Helen seemed to have wings to her feet. The bar before her appeared to enlarge and rise up out of her reach. She made one grasp at it before it vanished. One, two, three, four, five seconds before Ada, flushed and wild-eyed, touched it. Helen was too generous to turn her face, and felt almost sorry for her rival as the plaudits rang out.

The umpire stepped to the front and pounded lustily on it with her gavel. After a moment the cheering died down in eager attention.

"Miss Grant has broken the record by three seconds; won by five. We are proud of our new champion."

There was an uproar again wild enough for a boys' college. Girls evidently had good lungs. Then they indulged in the class yell, and all was confusion as groups pressed for-



ward to congratulate Helen and introduce her to that and this friend. Some of the mothers and sisters had come up from Bedford, and there were a number of masculines.

"My foot turned," Ada was explaining to her circle. "Then I gave up, although I was so near the goal. I'm sorry I disappointed you girls, and I lost my own time by two seconds. But you see it was just a speeding between ourselves, and was not as if we had challenged the seniors, or anything, and it really doesn't count. Before next June, Miss Grant will likely lose it. And the prizes, you know, are not important."

Still Ada Foster was deeply mortified, for she had been very sure of success, and her aim was to hold the class championship all the year.

Helen was escorted around the circle in triumph. There was a crowd in the gymnasium when the class president, who this year was Miss Van Duyne, made a felicitious speech and distributed the prizes, which were not very grand, to be sure. Helen hurried to



her room, took a good rub-down, and gowned herself for luncheon.

“I’m so proud of you,” Lorraine declared. “And I am so glad you are my chum. Half the girls are envying me!”

“You’ll make me vainer than a peacock,” Helen replied with a bright, wholesome laugh.

“But when you look at your feet you won’t have to drop your plumage,” was the arch reply. “You have such splendid health and strength, Helen, and to-day the feet deserve all credit.”

“The feet had a master. I didn’t think of winning, truly, until that last quarter. And then I tried with all my might, a sort of self-ish might, wasn’t it?”

“Why, no. For the honor of the class you were to do your best.”

“But just a foot-race! And the many splendid intellectual matters one might excel in. I almost envy the girls who can write fine poems.”

The girls were waiting in the corridor to squeeze her hand and say delightful things, and several girls were brave enough to kiss



her. Helen had not encouraged effusiveness; some of the sentimental girls disgusted her.

"Now we must go to town this afternoon," declared Miss Grainger. "I want some music I have ordered, and Strong & Alden have a show of moving pictures — free at that. Let's make a party and storm the town."

A crowd of girls eagerly assented, though more than one felt conscience-smitten at choosing between pleasure and study. But Saturdays came only once a week, while one had to study every day.

Lorraine was eager to go, as she had a few articles to purchase. Helen really felt that she was pushed in the forefront by the plan, so it would not do for her to decline. She was fond of pleasure, too.

They did have a gay time. Strong & Alden had almost what one might call a department store, an innovation in the pretty town. They had also a branch library, occasionally an exhibition of pictures, and a music-room, with a polite young clerk, an attraction to the college girls. Moving pictures were quite a new thing and aroused a good deal of curiosity.



Every half-hour they were put in motion. Some of the girls had not seen them at all.

They were just in time for one display. It did seem wonderful; trees waving in the wind, birds flying, a barn-yard with cattle moving about, and a flock of chickens. There was also a regatta on the river, and the girls could hardly refrain from cheering the winning boat. Last of all was the renowned chariot-race, and then everybody applauded.

They dawdled over the shopping and bought various ornamental things that they would be puzzled to find space for; then went to the confectioner's to lay in a stock of sweets, and through into the clean, pretty parlor for refreshments.

"It is to be a Dutch treat," announced Miss Van Duyne. "No girl is to suffer for another's extravagance, but if you are madly wild to treat a friend and waste your money, that will be your own affair."

"Except Miss Grant. We ought all to send her some choice bit," declared one girl.

"Miss Grant is my particular guest," announced Miss Denman. "I am to see that



she keeps herself in good order. Let us remember dinner and the variety of Saturday night desserts, and have a due regard for our pocketbooks as well as our stomachs."

Two or three clapped their thumb-nails in applause.

" 'Man,' says the sage of Ecclefechan, 'is not a happy animal, his appetite for sweet victual is so enormous.' Did he mean to include women? "

"I think he knew nothing about college girls. He could not have refrained from a scathing diatribe if he had."

"When your mind weakens and drops down, a dose of Carlyle is a good tonic. You fight every step of the way and are the better for it. But to our sweets, and then home, or we shall be late for dinner."



## CHAPTER V

### FRIENDS AND A CHRISTMAS CONFIDENCE

HELEN was conscious of a desire as well as a preference for pretty things about her. Some girls made shrines of beauty out of their rooms, had hangings and cushions and rugs, a jardinière with a pot of flowers, a tea-table with the choicest china they could afford, bookshelves with some fine editions of poets, and portfolios of engravings. She had been severely plain her first year, largely out of regard for her roommate, and then, also, she had not really cared for so much adornment. She had not spent all her allowance, as she wished to have a little left when her college life was over. But now that she had skipped one year she did not need to study economy so closely. It was a pleasure to indulge in a choice bit of something, although it was almost a duplicate of an article in her room at Miss Craven's.



Her social side was developing as well. She liked the bright talk, the gay jests, the plans, the desperate attempts at verse that often degenerated into the ridiculous, the tough translations, the classifying of temperaments, even of nerves and faults, yet still keeping a scrupulous regard for the personal equation. There were girls, she found, who wasted their energy on trifles, who spent time bemoaning a difficult task or problem, and then were obliged to hurry through with it only half-digested. There were girls who seemed to have come to college because home was dull and tiresome, and it was a rather fascinating way of passing a few years. What a curious little world it was!

Some girls went home for Thanksgiving, starting the night before and bound to return early Friday morning. There was a college feast, to be sure, and much eating of philopenas as they lingered around the second desert. The seniors gave an amusing little play, and they wound up with a dance in the entertainment hall.

And now most girls began to take stock of



their attainments for examination. There was the college *Miscellany* to be gotten in order for January; also teas to be given for the last time, as if no one would come back after Christmas. The weather had come off cold, and there was a wild fervor of skating. The various plans, too, were enough to drive one wild, as well as the endless discussion of Christmas gifts, the running into Bedford for silk and ribbons and stamped book-covers to work.

A crowd was in Miss Denman's room in eager discussion.

A girl, settled on a gray furry rug, clasping her knees with both arms and rocking to and fro, her fuzzy light hair making an aureole about her face, stopped her motion so suddenly that she tilted over the girl next to her.

"I'm sick and tired of the whole thing! It's a humbug! I've flunked twice, I have to write a thesis over, my little poem has been flung out in disdain, and all because I've tried to work a centrepiece for my brother's betrothed. She is coming to spend Christmas with us,



and my sister really insisted that we should all give to her an article we had made ourselves. She sent me the centrepiece to work at odd spells; as if a collegian ever had odd spells except when her temper ran up to summer heat. It's about half-done. They are to be married at Easter and go to housekeeping. She has no end of cousins, some very well-to-do, although she is an only child and not at all rich. And there will be lots of lovely articles given her, no doubt. I'm glad of the cut-glass fashion, for you don't have to make that."

"It is a nuisance to be making things. I like books, if they don't duplicate what you already own. And handkerchiefs are nice, and never do come amiss. But when you have a ton of friends —" in a complaining tone.

"They lie heavy on you," responded some one, sententiously.

"There is quite too much present-giving for slim purses. Miss Grant, air your ideas."

"I echo yours heartily," Helen said in an eager tone. "We ought to be brave enough



to judge and act for ourselves. I think we are too much afraid of what the other party will say. And I want to announce just here that I shall more than anything appreciate the gift of a pretty Christmas card, because I know it is not costly and no girl has sat up o' nights to paint a picture or work a book-cover, and has not cudgelled her brains as to what she shall give me."

"Bravo! Let us pass the resolution among the juniors: a fine for sending anything larger than a Christmas card. I do really think they are coming in again. There were loads of them at Easter. Miss Grant, thanks for your suggestion. Girls, a card or nothing. And even at that high practice of economy, I don't know that I shall have enough to go round. College isn't a cheap place."

"Cut the girls. Every one has a family; I suppose we have a duty to them. I'm going home to the family bosom. I will be their Christmas present for the next ten days. Will not that be enough?"

That caused a general laugh, as Hilda Lee turned the scale at a hundred and forty.



"Girls, there will be dinner in ten minutes. Scamper!"

"Can we come back afterward?"

"No," answered Lorraine, promptly. "Helen and I have a singing practice after chapel, and then I have a paper to read on the old Hebrews that makes my head spin until I wish they had shared Pharaoh's fate in the Red Sea."

The girls went reluctantly. Helen had changed her dress, and as she studied her friend said:

"You look tired to death, Lorraine."

"I am. I wish to-morrow was the last day."

"We have dissipated too much. I begin to realize that I am away behind. Why do you laugh?"

"I was thinking — you have to live up to your reputation now. You *must* get into the seniors next year, and I shall be awfully sorry, for I know I shall be left behind. But you won't let it impair our friendship?" she added in an entreating tone.

"Why should it? The very dear friend of



my girlhood had no college ambitions, though I tried to persuade her to join me."

"That Miss Craven?"

"Yes."

"You are very fond of her?"

Lorraine had just finished the last puff on the top of her head and put in a comb. Helen clasped her arms about the slender neck.

"Lorraine," in a tender tone, "I love you very much. I liked you when I first guessed your name, and you were very sweet to me last year. I'm not a sentimental girl. In a way, I like a good many, but when it comes to a real preference, a real friendship, I couldn't spread myself around. Maybe I'm narrow."

"No, you are not. You are discriminating, I think. The girls like me a good deal, but I have not made many deep friendships. I want you; you are so strong, and somehow I feel weak. But I'm not going to be a drag on you. I'm proud of you — should be, even if you left me far behind."

"But I'm not going to. We shall keep step





"LORRAINE, I LOVE YOU VERY MUCH."—Page 92.







and enter the seniors together. We shall have a good strong friendship because — ”

“ Well, because what? ”

“ Neither of us is really exigent.”

“ Oh, I think I am! Did you ever imagine how it would be if some one loved you with all her mind and strength and you felt so secure that you knew nothing could change the regard? That is one point that perplexes me. I’ve seen so many of these warm friendships drop out, die of their own accord, and then I wonder if I could hold any one. Our ideals develop, we ask more. Perhaps that is the insight into character that education and experience brings about.”

“ I wonder if I could be any one’s ideal; ”  
Helen flushed.

“ The girls will make a heroine of you. Oh, you will see! I’m not cynical, but I haven’t abounding faith in these rapturous preferences.”

“ Oh, you need not be afraid! ”

“ They will want you to go in everything, to join societies, and all that. Oh, yes, you are the sort of girl that people take pride in!



Miss Morse thinks you superior. And there was that Miss Bradshaw; you must have impressed yourself strongly upon her mind. And Leslie Brooks admires you. She has been carrying a heavy burden, and I think it isn't quite lifted yet. I could love her dearly. Oh, you must think me silly! and there's the bell."

She hurried into a gown and went downstairs. The juniors had a great many nice society ways that made Helen think often of Aldred House.

After chapel they sang some of the music of the Holy City. Lorraine's eyes had in them a suspicious glitter that touched Helen, who felt how near the tears were. She was very pale, and there was a sort of exalted look in her face. Was it the music that had moved her so?

"What a splendid voice you have, Miss Grant. I wish after the holidays you would join our musical circle. We have some fine voices, and about Easter mean to give a sort of classic concert. I can't endure those trivial foolish things; even our college songs might



be of a little higher degree, don't you think so?"

"I have not much spare time and belong to one club already. There seem so many things —"

"You must throw over the non-essentials. I mean to propose you, anyhow. We are going to take up Handel for our next study."

The crush of girls intervened; it was complimentary, and Miss Evarts was in training for a musical professor and had published some fine songs of the higher order.

"Come in and have some tea with us!" cried the head of another group. "We want you in our society; we're going to study up the political condition of the country, and what difference, if any, woman's suffrage will make. It's not late —"

"But I have lessons and lessons," and Helen almost pulled herself away by force.

"I told you how it would be," and Lorraine gave a faint sort of smile that evinced lack of strength rather than disapproval.

Helen gave a bright laugh, as they both went to Lorraine's room.



"Now I shall make some tea."

"You will do nothing of the kind," said Helen. "Professor Blake doesn't approve of such dissipation. You are to sit here pillowed in the steamer-chair, and I am going to read about the wanderings and servitude of the old Hebrews. You will not go to sleep, but pay good attention, and I shall question you occasionally."

"How good you are;" and Lorraine did as she was bidden.

Helen read slowly to familiarize the matter in her own mind. Her voice was very pleasant in its strength and emphasis.

"You would make a splendid lecturer," Lorraine said. "You impress your facts upon your hearers."

But presently, her eyes began to droop. She might as well sleep, Helen thought, and went on for her own information. When she paused at the end of the task, Lorraine roused suddenly.

"Ungrateful girl that I am, I did go to sleep! But some of it is floating through my mind."



"It will help you in the morning. And now, good night," she said, slipping away.

At this time there were many inattentive girls who tried the patience of teachers. Most of them were discounting home pleasures.

Helen had expected to go to her friend, but to her surprise she found herself largely in arrears. It was not that she had missed so much, but that many things were only half-learned, and did not seem to be stored in her memory with the certainty to which she was accustomed. She was really surprised at herself; she had no grand secret of serving two masters.

So she decided to remain at college and go over the studies of the past month. It certainly would not do to fail in entering the seniors; she must live up to her reputation, and she smiled at herself, thinking that a reputation was rather costly.

"I wish I were going to take you home with me," Lorraine said, longingly. "Mother would like you so, and father would praise your good common sense. He is strong on that."



"Thank you for the really delightful wish. Come back well and eager for the fray, and we will turn our backs on the demands of society."

"And you must go in my room at least once a day. Let it be just at twilight. I'll send a thought to you. And it will only be a little while—ten days. Yet it seems as if I were going away for ever so long."

"Be sure and get some roses in your cheeks. Come back in good shape."

Miss Morse approved of Helen's self-denial, for it was really that. She had grown fond of pleasure.

"I have noticed for the last fortnight that you were not as ready as usual, and have been wondering a little at the cause. Go to bed early; get rested up in body and mind. My brother and I are going to take a short trip to Washington, but I shall think of you. I'd like to have you with me."

"Oh, thank you!" Helen flushed with pleasure.

There was a great tumult in the corridors, which seemed to be strewn with satchels and



suit-cases. Girls flew at each other with frantic good-bys, some even shed tears over the brief separation. But there were many left behind, those who lived too far away and some who had planned to have no end of fun.

Helen went to her room and took an account of stock, as she phrased it. Here were letters and letters to be answered, exercises to be gone over with the admonitory comment, "You can do better." She had not written to her friend, Juliet, until the last moment, lest she might be persuaded to change her decision.

Miss Brooks came in the juniors' dining-room. Helen looked up with a smile.

"I'll take Lorraine's place and dine with you," she began. "You two have been very chummy of late, and I am glad. But it seems to me she is not looking real well."

"She is not, though I think it mostly fatigue and staying up too late at night; taking the pleasure first and the study afterward. I am going to turn over a new leaf," and there was a blitheness in her tone that showed the idea was not unpleasant.



"You are going to try for the seniors next year?"

"I should be ashamed not to. But you will not be here."

"I don't quite know. There are some studies I should like to go on with. You see" — and Miss Brooks made a long pause — "matters are a little different with me. I may stay for a post-graduate course and take up some of the things I skipped. You know last year I tutored a good deal."

"It must use up considerable energy."

"Yes, in a certain way; and it takes time. I wasn't doing it from the high motive of benefiting backward girls altogether."

"But I think you were very generous to newcomers," said Helen, glancing up with an engaging smile.

"You had your share, I believe," said Leslie, answering the smile. "What do you hear of that girl who adored you, and yet dropped out after her year's experience?"

"She is well and very happy, has a lover, an admiring family, is teaching school, and



saving up money to buy wedding and house-keeping things."

"What a year that was among the freshmen! Once in awhile there seems just such an outbreak. Are you quite through? We could take a little walk before chapel time — unless you hate to leave the warm precincts of steam-heat and fascinating lamplight — just the combination to pore over 'My Study Fire,' or some other enchanting book of Hamilton Mabie's."

"I'll take the walk, though the other is very tempting."

They both rose and nodded cordially to the girls nearest them, who looked rather forlorn. There was no gay, eager chatting; the first evening after the parting of the ways seemed to stretch out with the gray loneliness of a desert.

"It's just horrid!" declared a girl with her brows drawn into a frown. "I'm sorry I did not insist on going home. But it costs so much for the little time, and father sent me five dollars to spend for nonsense, over and above my allowance. I wonder if we couldn't



go down to the city and blow it in at a theatre-party, and have a supper. There'd be a dollar for a ticket, another dollar for the supper, expenses one-fifty, and a bit of change for something to bring home. Oh, yes, let us get five or six girls to do it!"

Miss Brooks looked at Helen as they were fastening their golf-capes and tying their hats down with veils.

"That doesn't look extravagant," she said as they stepped out on the walk.

Drifts of clouds went scurrying along, driven by the sharp wind that didn't seem to know its own mind, it whisked around in such a spiteful fashion.

"Yet, how much money girls waste on pleasures, and then bewail the fact of a college education costing so much—or their parents do. And Kate Borden is generally behind in every kind of dues. She joins so many things and nearly always drops out before the year ends. There ought to be more real honesty impressed upon girls. Generosity is an admirable quality, but it ought not to be cultivated on other people's money."



"That was one virtue I liked and respected in Grace Trevor. Her story had a bit of odd romance in it. Will it be gossip if I repeat part of it?"

Miss Brooks had the name of being rather severe on schoolgirl gossip, and never listened to surmises.

"Why, no, if it is the best side of her character. I wondered a little how you could keep such friends. She seemed so dependent."

"Well, I'm quite used to dependent people; they appear to gravitate to me. I will tell you how she came to enter college against her will."

They had to walk rapidly, and the wind blew Helen's voice about as she rehearsed the aunt's theories which she insisted upon putting in practice whether for the best or not. "And I thought the most admirable conclusion was that she meant to help her father pay back the cost of the year's tuition here, since she had disappointed her aunt."

"That was really fine. Only I hope the aunt won't take it; I think she should have had more sense in the beginning. But there



is a glamour about college. I hope you like it down in the bottom of your heart."

"I believe I am coming to the fascinating sense. My purpose was to study, to learn things that would fit me for first-class teaching. I never supposed there could be so much fun and frivolity and indifference. I *should* be mortified to death if I had some of the atrocious recitations and exercises."

"I think it rather develops a girl, even if she does seem unpromising at first. Oh, just listen to the grandeur of that wind! It is way up on the hill, rolling down like an organ. It suggests Wagner. Do you know much about his music?"

"I heard 'Tristan and Isolde' last winter. It was — well, I can't think of a proper adjective — magnificent to me."

"And now —" Leslie held her arm a moment. The sound came rolling down the hill in a grand diapason, and you could hear the shaking of the leafless branches. It rolled on and on, then came across the level in one grand sweep that nearly blew them over.

"Let us run for our lives while it is at our



backs," laughed Leslie. "Ugh! But it is cold, and I believe there are spits of snow. Well, it is a bad sign to have a green Christmas, I have heard, and snow is beautiful."

They skimmed along with the help of the wind. It seemed as if their feet hardly touched the ground. Then the wind ceased suddenly, and the air felt warm by contrast. They slackened their pace and caught their breath.

"That was fine!" declared Leslie. "Oh, I don't wonder you won! And your steps are so even, like beats of music. You have knowledge in your feet, as well as your brain."

"What an idea!" laughed Helen.

"From the desert I come to thee,  
On a stallion shod with fire;  
And the winds are left behind,  
In the speed of my desire,"

half-chanted Leslie as they paused in the doorway.

"Oh, that stirring poem of Bayard Taylor's! It sets you all aflame. I'm glad you like it."

"I haven't time for ever so many things



I like. Where shall we go to have a talk over our likes and dislikes? I am in a mood for discussion. Let us go to the corner of the library by the wood fire, if no one is sitting there."

They had their hearts' desire. The library was deserted, except in the alcove where Miss Ferris was talking to several of the seniors on suffrage. The place was so large that one could only hear the hum. Most of the lights were turned low but the fire was blazing cheerfully.

"We'll each take a rocking-chair. Our English sisters may laugh at us, but I do like the swaying, restful motion. It is as soothing as a man's cigar. Now this is comfort. Question first: Why didn't you go home for vacation, Miss Helen Grant?"

"One reason was, I have no real home, or perhaps too many hospitable ports where my barque can drift in, sure of a welcome. The other, the most important one, is that I'm so shamefully behind that I must spend some days in reviewing to be sure of my ground, lest I shall be caught napping by some unexpected



question. I've found so much pleasure demoralizing."

"Very well and concisely put. You look like a girl with courage and common sense. One point touches me; I have no home, either. My parents died when I was quite small. There were three of us and some money. Laura was the oldest, and she kept us together. Edmund went into business when he was old enough, and is being promoted year by year. I graduated at the high school of my town and longed ardently to go to college, and Laura said I must. She was a sort of mother to me."

"And she died —" Helen said softly in the long pause.

"Yes." Leslie reached over and took her hand. "I'd like to tell some girl the whole story. Miss Kinnard, who took a fancy to me when I first entered, and whom you remember as one of the professors, knows a little of the sad episode. I didn't know it all myself at first. I was an eager young freshman, and college suited me to a dot. Laura was taken ill soon after I entered, but no one told me about



it; at least, Edmund only said she wasn't well. I went to Buffalo with a chum for winter vacation and saw frozen Niagara in all its glory, and it was magnificent. I can't tell why I did not suspect things were not all right at home and why Laura wrote so seldom, only letter-writing was a great burden to her, and Edmund was a good correspondent. So when vacation came, I learned that all our life was to be changed. Laura's illness had puzzled the doctors; it was one phase of spinal meningitis, and she slowly lost her mind, though she recovered her physical health. It was thought that an asylum would be the best place and that good treatment would restore her. The house, it was only a small cottage in the suburbs, was to be rented out. Edmund would board with the family, and in a year Laura might return to us."

"Oh!" Helen murmured with deep feeling, pressing the hand she held.

"There was some money, but Laura's maintenance was rather expensive. She and Edmund had both come in possession of their share. Mine, of course, would more than edu-



cate me, and my brother insisted that I should go on at college. I was sort of dazed at the untoward event, but I did have a good deal of hope, as youth generally has. Still, I found I could not be extravagant; indeed, I cast about to see what I could do. There were some backward Latin sophs, and I began to tutor them. I went to the asylum with Edmund in vacation, but poor Laura did not know me. She was gentle and inconsequent and had really lost all her reason. There was no hope for her. She might live years in this state."

"Oh! how could you endure it!" cried Helen.

"I could not if I had not loved study and had my aim before me. Then the life here was very entertaining in all its changeful aspects. We knew my sister did not suffer and had the best of care. I had a sort of frightened feeling all the time lest something should leak out here. Laura wasn't violent, you know, nor melancholy, but really happy, singing to herself, gathering flowers and grasses, and talking to them and the trees.



After awhile, I realized how much worse it might be, and I began to thank God and take courage, like brave old St. Paul. I enjoyed the chapel services, and learned to see the wider duty, that to one's neighbor. I did have a little anxiety about the money, but Edmund was so good. There is a lovely young girl with whom he had always been friends, and they became engaged just about the time this happened to Laura, but she would not consent to have the engagement broken. So they went on cheerfully, and in July there was a new business arrangement; the position he had been working and waiting for was given to him, and he began to plan for a home again. I went on tutoring, as you know. It took so much of my time that I really had to stint on the pleasures, and I dare say many of the girls thought it queer. In the summer, I had an opportunity to care for two little girls as a sort of governess while their parents went abroad. It was excellent pay and a lovely home, restful and not arduous. At the very last week the word came about poor Laura. She had been rather drooping for some weeks,



it seemed, but she had slipped quietly out of life one Sunday afternoon. A nurse had heard her singing and thought she had fallen asleep. It is lovely to remember, since it must be so," and Leslie's voice faltered.

"Oh, I don't see how you could have been so cheerful and taken such an interest in the girls and studied and seemed so happy!" cried Helen.

"But I have been happy. I resolved to trust to that greater grace, to Him who giveth liberally and upbraideth not. And I like to think of Laura being in her right mind and enjoying all the pleasures of that beautiful better land. She remembered mother so vividly and always longed for her, and she has her now. I'm glad there was some one to welcome her. And Edmund has been so tender through it all. It was much harder for him. And so He bringeth them to the haven where they would be."

"O that men would therefore praise the Lord for His goodness; and declare the wonders He doeth for the children of men," Helen repeated, reverently.



The clock with its cathedral chime was striking ten. The janitor came in to put out the lights, and they both rose.

Helen put her arm over Leslie's shoulder.

"I am proud of your confidence," and there was a tremulous sound in her voice. "If I could have singled out one among all the girls for a friend, I think it would have been you."

"Thank you. I wish we were in the same class, though now I am quite sure of staying another year. I had meant to take part of Edmund's burden so that he could marry, but that is not necessary now. You see we both have the same aim, teaching. I am glad to be friends. I had heard considerable of your life from Miss Bradshaw. Some night we will talk that over."

"Oh, how it snows! You must have an umbrella."

"Oh, no! my golf-cape will be sufficient. Good night, dear. Let us both dream of Lorraine, happy and gay."



## CHAPTER VI

### FROM DIFFERENT POINTS OF VIEW

THERE were enough girls to make Christmas ring merrily through the halls, and there were surprise parcels, tied with ribbons with a sprig of holly slipped through, laid at doors, in spite of all the talk about Christmas gifts. The gifts were mostly a box of bonbons or a dainty illustrated booklet, and many, many good wishes. It really seemed quite delightful to Helen.

The chapel had been beautifully decorated. The service, with its grand anthems and appropriate hymns, its brief but fine sermon, with the communion office afterward, seemed like a bit from heaven to Helen. Leslie was among those who went forward, and a pang pierced Helen's heart as she longed to kneel beside her. Why was she not there? It had always seemed rather awesome to her, but to-



day she felt drawn by several tender chords. She had many religious impulses; what, therefore, was lacking?

She had been much won by Mrs. Bell's fervent faith and loving counsels. But here it seemed as if many of the girls took religious interest as the thing to do; not saving grace for one's self.

Leslie voiced her desire as they came out.

"We must go thither together, Helen. I missed you. Let us be friends in this matter also."

Quite a bevy of the girls had taken trains for the day's pleasure. The snowfall had not been great, and was rapidly melting in the clear sunshine. It was a day on which to proclaim good-will to men. The wind was at rest and the air had a balmy sort of crispness.

"I've promised to dine with Miss Van Meter," Leslie said. "And there's part of the 'Messiah' to be sung in the evening, you know. We shall depend on your voice. Then let's go to Lorraine's room; she will be glad to hear that we were there."

Luncheon-bell rang. The chairs had a



scared sort of look, the knives, forks, and spoons a lonesome aspect. Both of Helen's neighbors were away.

"Oh, come over here, Miss Grant!" exclaimed two or three of the girls. "Doesn't it seem funny? Yet there are lots of girls left. They ought to be sent to one hall, and not look so skimpy."

They had a bright little chat there. Helen turned a deaf ear to their blandishments, and went to her room. She had not read all her letters, nor inspected her gifts. Old friends at Hope had not forgotten her, and there was Uncle Jason's five-dollar gold piece. The remembrance brought tears to her eyes. Mrs. Wilmarth's letter was cheery, with pleasant gossip about Hope. Juliet's was really upbraiding; did she not know she could have studied and done just as she pleased while with her? The children were disappointed. They were growing finely, developing different traits, and bits of unlooked-for wisdom. It was so sweet to have them. But nothing could quite fill Helen's place.

How many letters there were to answer!



She wrote until it was dark, then she went to the music-room, and played in the darkness awhile. After the evening service, some of the "Messiah" choruses were tried with most excellent effect.

"You ought to do something with that voice of yours, Miss Grant," Mr. Hall said. "I wish you had time to take some thorough training."

There were so many things to do in this busy world. But the best of all was the quiet end of evening in Lorraine's room. Helen and Leslie had each brought a little gift for her, and they talked over friendship and the duties of life that one found even here in college walls.

The remainder of the time Helen addressed herself strenuously to the half-studied tasks of the few past weeks, and also took a little look ahead. She and Leslie and several of the other girls went into Cranston, chaperoned by Miss Van Meter, to hear the opera of "Martha." Altogether, it had been a very satisfactory time to Helen, and she felt ready to begin with fresh vigor. She had become a



good deal interested in some new girls, or rather those she had scarcely remarked before. There were frequent opportunities for real friendships, for much sympathy, yet, how many girls were lacking in reticence, and seemed almost to dump the story of their life and home upon one. She was growing rather exclusive, she felt.

One bright, pretty girl fell into a state of adoration about her. She was a new student, and seemed to have few wants ungratified, if one could judge by unstinted expenditure and pretty adornments. She had been one of the most enthusiastic admirers when Helen had won her race.

"You looked so splendid!" she exclaimed, her soft, dark eyes aglow with enthusiasm. "If I could have used a camera, I should just have made a picture of you as you touched the bar. In Greek drapery you would have been a flying Atalanta. Why don't we wear beautiful garments as they did then?"

"Because we are utilitarians," returned Helen with a bright, half-sarcastic laugh. "Our clothes are for use; we have so much to



do in this world, and we cannot afford graceful, hanging drapery when we have rooms to dust, and just a second to get our places in class-rooms. Then there are athletics — ”

“ I just hate the gym! Do you think it is of any advantage to girls who are being fitted for society? Don't all those ropes and bars and Indian clubs spoil your hands? On my mother's side, we have very handsome hands. I wear fives in gloves, just what Queen Victoria wore.”

She held out her hand. It was slim, with tapering fingers and polished pink nails. Helen half-envied it, though it didn't look like a hand to grasp and hold on to the great things of life.

“ You are larger than Queen Victoria was,” Helen commented.

“ Oh, good gracious, no! at least, not fat!” she replied, in an alarmed tone. “ I hope I shall never get fat. Mamma is as slim as any young girl, but Eloise takes after father's people and is already growing stout. It doesn't matter so much, for she has a lover who really abhors thin people, and is always quoting



Cassius with his lean and hungry look. My waist measure is just seventeen inches, without bands and belts. How Miss Creighton does go on about corsets."

"The poor corsets don't hurt!" exclaimed Helen, humorously. "It's the tight lacing."

"There's no need of my lacing tightly, but I never shall allow myself to get over eighteen inches before I am twenty-five, and never over twenty inches."

Helen took a pleasant survey of her; Shirley Chardavoyne, a romantic name that seemed to just suit her, though she did not in the least resemble Charlotte Brontë's Shirley. She was slim and exquisitely formed, with a sort of pleading, infantile face, large, dark, soulful eyes, with delicately marked brows, a transparent sort of complexion, a pretty mouth with rosy lips that quivered when she was excited. She had a circle of adorers, and a circle of detractors among the hardier girls who made a fetich of physical culture, large waists, robust-looking hands, and who always wore common-sense shoes.

"Oh, I don't wonder you like yourself!"



Helen exclaimed, impulsively. "But — we are all so different. One would think the variety would get exhausted in time."

Shirley seemed to wonder at the remark, then she said, naïvely, "I like you very much. Oh, I admire your courage and strength! But I couldn't do half the things you do, and the girls said you skipped a whole year, which was splendid! But I came to college for — well," coloring daintily, "it's a sort of fashion now. It gives one a prestige — don't you think? And you meet so many girls. We live in a quiet old Virginia town where there are not half-enough beaux to go round. The young men are off to Washington to get positions. My brother is at Annapolis, but he is only a middy yet. It is stupid at home, father and mother reading poetry to each other, and discussing it. I just adore poetry, but I love dancing and dressing up for teas and such, and having fun with young people. I like it here ever so much."

"I'm glad you do," rejoined Helen. "You will find a good many delightful girls. And now we must save the rest of our talk for



some other time. It is the afternoon exercise hour out on the campus."

A few days after, she found a delicately tinted and scented note on her table. It contained a few verses, and she guessed at once who was the writer or author. Was Miss Chardavoyne a sort of genius? There was no signature, neither did the child, for she really was that, display any confused consciousness at their next meeting. Helen was rather interested.

Some really pretty verses had been sent to her with Christmas wishes in the same handwriting. Helen was a little puzzled to know whether it was best to acknowledge them by a card, then she remembered the talk about Christmas gifts. It was not wise to begin by admitting freshmen to intimacy. One could be courteous, kind, and helpful when occasion required, but it was not best to enlarge the sphere of one's duties.

Miss Chardavoyne went away for Christmas, and was a week late in returning. That very evening, Helen, coming in from a singing practice, found a slim box done up with a



white ribbon and her name in bold characters. It was not Willard Bell; she had forbidden any remembrance from him.

Opening it, she found a beautiful edition of "The Ancient Mariner." On the fly-leaf was a daintily written acrostic ending with, "Love fervent and true. S. C."

There could be no doubt about the donor. It was a costly gift, and Helen's cheek burned. Her first impulse was to return it, but there was the unfortunate acrostic, and it was truly poetical, with charming conceits.

She evaded the girl all the next day, and she knew Shirley was too well-bred to come to her room without an invitation. She ran to Leslie's room just before dinner with the gift in her hand.

"Why, that is really superb! What an admirer you must have! Though I suppose it is your friend, Miss Craven."

"She knows better than that," and Helen flushed as if annoyed. "Read the inscription."

"What a lovely, dainty thing! Do you know, it suggests Herrick and the poets of



that time? I never thought there could be so much real beauty in an acrostic. Have you unearthed a new poet? Why, I am intensely interested. And all this worship to be offered at your shrine. Miss Grant, juniors have no right to lovers, though admirers may be tolerated."

Leslie was smiling, and her eyes shone with curiosity, as if she was really insistent upon an answer.

"There's a queer story, and I am glad to tell you. I haven't had a father confessor among the girls, O 'Miss Ophelia,' so I think I shall take you. I have an admirer, and I don't know what to do. Advise me."

And then came out the story. Leslie listened with much interest.

"Helen, you did look like a young goddess that day," she said, laughingly. "You are one of the girls who have beautiful moments, and it is fortunate to have them appear at the right instant. But I am puzzled about these verses. I suppose they are original. They are suggestive. Either she must be very well read or have a touch of the divine inspiration. I'll



have to look her up. Poets are born at times, even in the prosaic world of to-day."

"But about the gift. I'm sorry it was so expensive. And," laughing, "I have two copies already donated by dear friends. You see it is difficult to pass them on when your name is on an elegant fly-leaf."

"Why, it would be simply dreadful to send it back! She may come to be an ornament to the college if cruel disappointment does not blight her genius in the bud. Truly, I am seized with a sudden interest in her. There are candle geniuses that soon burn down, and you take a delight in snuffing them out. But I *have* seen them grow brighter. We have evolved several of them. I think the best thing would be to write a graceful little note of thanks, and —"

"And what?" in the long pause, as she saw Leslie's eyes fixed on the opposite wall regarding it vaguely.

"I honestly believe, Helen, that you do not want to receive gifts like these. You are a frank, upright sort of girl, and it is embarrassing not to return them in some kind or



degree, which is a bad plan to adopt. One would spend a good deal of money on it; and sometimes, you wouldn't really care for the girl."

"I shall not begin it," said Helen, resolutely. "I can't afford it. That is one nice thing between Miss Craven and myself. She understands that I am not able to compete with her, and she doesn't want anything but the regard. It is such a pleasure for her to give, but she doesn't overburden you. Why that smile?"

A peculiar bright light had crossed Leslie's face like a half-hidden sunbeam peering out.

"Some one says it is a duty to let others do to us as we would do if the occasions were reversed. But we ought to be quite certain we would do it, I suppose. And nothing comes nearer to putting me out of temper than to have a friend — no, I will say a person — often remarking, 'Oh, I should so delight to do this or that for you!' some great thing, when they do not even offer you a small favor within their means. I had a schoolmate once who would now and then buy me a box of



chocolate bonbons, of which she was extravagantly fond. I despised chocolate, and she invariably said, 'Oh! I forgot — you don't love chocolate!' Then she devoured them herself."

Helen laughed heartily; then after some consideration, she said:

"I think your advice is good. But I do not want any real intimacy with the child, for she seems that to me."

"Ask her to the library some evening; I should like to meet her, and it isn't quite like inviting her to your room."

"Yes, I wish you to see her. I don't know how much of a judge of character I am, but she impressed me as being rather frivolous and fond of dress, chains, and beads, and all that."

Leslie was reading the inscription over. The book itself was certainly very beautiful.

"Helen," she began, presently, "have you heard from Lorraine? Oh, you needn't fear that I shall be jealous, even though my friendship does date farther back! I'm pleased when the right kind of people like Lorraine, and I



do not think exclusive intimacies beneficial for college girls. They are so apt to measure others by their own standard and get unjustly critical."

"No. I was thinking perhaps you had heard. Is she not generally pretty prompt about returning?"

"Why, yes — she seldom stays away for pure pleasure."

"I thought her rather languid that last week or two."

"Oh, I hope she isn't ill!"

Helen was rather startled at that.

They heard from her a few days later, and the president was notified. There was a scratchy little note in a very shaky hand. Christmas had been delightful, but for several days she had been feeling ill and forlorn, and now a fever had set in, but she was quite sure to be back at the end of the month, and felt awfully disappointed.

Helen wrote her note to Miss Chardavoyne, and said very frankly that she could not return in kind, and that she must not shower such splendid favors upon her in the future;



also, would she not like to come into the library after chapel and meet some of the juniors and seniors? Thursday evening would be convenient for her.

She was sauntering out for exercise hour, thinking which of the group of girls she should approach, when two arms were flung about her and a voice cried joyously:

"Oh, you dear! I've been watching for you. I was just dying to see you. Your note was charming. It is so lovely of you to chap-erone me in the library. I'm scared half to death when I go in and don't know a soul."

The face turned upon her was brilliant with eager lights, and Helen could not help smiling.

"But you were naughty about the book. Do you suppose I thought of any return? I had just a splendid time in New York with a friend, and we went to theatres and two operas. Don't the people dress beautifully? And such diamonds! And so many nice young men! There were two girls fairly besieged with them! And one, Mr. Bradford, chose the book for me. It was the prettiest edition."

"It is really splendid! I did not know you



were a poet. And you had the art to make an acrostic really charming."

"Oh, I used to write verses at home! I did get so tired of always reading them. Mamma is generally poring over the old English poets and Latin translations. She thinks there are no great modern poets, though she fancies the Rossettis somewhat. And I like so many of them. I just used to sit and steep myself in the atmosphere, the poetical aura. But I couldn't write about nothing. I want some *one*, a personality, to inspire me."

Miss Chardavoyne had talked in a rapid breath, and now she had to pause for inspirations that were not poetry. Her cheeks were glowing, her eyes luminous. Yes, she was pretty.

"Don't you think there are a good many commonplace girls? Oh, I like the fun and the wit that they fling at each other, but you can't talk to them of the deep things in your soul! They laugh at sentiment, so I have not found many kindred spirits. They admire my pretty clothes, but that is just the outside shell, and sometimes you want to go down



deep into the very soul of things. Do you know much about Shelley? There are some lines of his that just thrill me through, and then I long to be a great poet."

"You are very young yet. But we must not stand here in the cold. We are supposed to run or walk briskly or kick a football around, even, without the honor of any game, or play at any of the games, and circulate our blood, according to Harvey."

"Is that one of the professors? Do you have to mind everything they say?"

Miss Chardavoyne looked up innocently.

"It is considered best," returned Helen, dryly, too really courteous to correct her, and yet a little conscience-smitten.

It was a bleak January day, though the wind was sullen, rather than fierce. The tall trees were outlined against the low gray with the minuteness of a sharp pencil-drawing. The grass was dry and crackled under one's feet. A hazy darkness was fast settling down.

"Dare you to a race over to the group of chestnuts!" cried a merry voice.

"Dare me, as well!" exclaimed another.



Helen dropped her young poet's arm, and was off in a flash. The girl's heart swelled with a sense of disappointment.

"I could love her so much," she murmured to herself. "I'm always longing for the unattainable, I know, but that is all that will ever satisfy me. Only I wish she didn't care so much for these common things. I hoped college girls would be more refined; some of them are positively coarse."

The sky was turning and settling lower until it seemed to touch the tops of the trees. The girls began to look like phantoms and their voices had a muffled sound, with no ringing echoes to the laughs. Miss Chardavoyne slowly wended her way back to the sheltering portico and huddled on the bench until the procession began to evolve out of darkness into the cheerful light of the halls. Oh, how warm and cheery it was! Girls hugged the radiators and scurried through the halls, their tongues loosened with gay and cordial merriment, calling to each other from their rooms as they were dressing for dinner.

Helen passed her admirer the next day as



both were on their way to classes, and the eyes were mutely upbraiding.

"I ought to apologize," she said, hurriedly. "A good run always tempts me, and I was getting so cold. To-morrow night, remember. I'll come for you."

"Oh, thank you! I shall be so glad."

After chapel, Shirley's next-door neighbor took her to the violin club. It was very fine, no doubt, but she considered it music going to waste, when one might be having such a good time dancing to it. Of course, it wasn't anything like the Hungarian Band in New York, and when they tuned up it almost tore her nerves into strings. She begged to be excused presently, and slipped off home, lighted her gas, but instead of studying, cried a little, then took her pencil and pad and began to write on shattered ideals, looking over two or three slim volumes of poetry, and wondering if she was going to be content at college. Then there was a tap at the door, and a good-natured girl with red hair cried:

"Oh, you poor little dear, all alone here, won't you come and have some tea with us?"



May Griggs is going to give us a skirt dance."

She was quite a real girl after all, in spite of the clouds of embryo poetry floating through her brain, and did enjoy the fun and frolic.

There was a tremendous snow the next day, and the girls were turned into the gymnasium and the courts for exercise. Miss Chardavoyne was quite an expert at playing with grace-hoops, and more than one girl envied her litheness. She was nearly the average height, but she had the effect of appearing small.

She donned one of her prettiest gowns, and pinned up the skirt when she went to chapel, covered with her long furry cloak.

"Oh, here you are!" exclaimed Helen, cordially, taking the small soft hand.

"The girls said you always came to chapel." Shirley looked up with a glad smile and nestled under Helen's wing.

The library was light and cheerful, as usual, with the blazing wood fire at the end. Girls were settling themselves, bringing out pads and fountain-pens, and making notes from the



open books before them. They were mostly higher-class girls; freshmen were still in the toils of tea, olives, bonbons, and jokes.

Helen walked slowly around with her. Here were alcoves of the old English poets, various editions of Spenser and Chaucer, and some going still further back when poetry was in the thought rather than rhyme. Here also were modern ones, here French, German, and Italian in their own language and translation. Miss Chardavoyne was a very fair French scholar and read a little in Italian, was quite conversant with some of the poets, but thought Dante just awful. Helen introduced her to several girls and presently she saw Leslie Brooks enter.



## CHAPTER VII

### WITH A POET

LESLIE looked very grave, she thought, but she smiled a little as she advanced and responded graciously to the young freshman. Miss Chardavoyne was rather awed at first, and only ventured the simplest sentences; she was not an aggressive girl. But they wandered to one of the alcoves of poetry where there was no one, and sat down. Leslie, with her wider experience, began to draw out the girl, who flushed and seemed embarrassed, and then, as if forgetting, burst into a flood of enthusiasm. She looked really very pretty, her eyes deep and luminous, the color coming and going in her delicate face.

“Do you ever try to write out your thoughts?” Leslie asked in an interested manner. “It is a wonder you haven’t been asked for verses of some sort.”



“Oh, I used to at home! But don't you think one must have an inspiration? I used to steal away down in the grove and listen to the whisper among the trees, broken now and then by the mocking-birds, we had so many of them, and beautiful chaotic thoughts would float through my brain. Sometimes, I'd catch just enough for one verse, but the rest wouldn't come. I have a great box full of them at home. Sister always called them rubbish and exhorted me to be practical. That seems to me awfully commonplace, though some people think there is great virtue in commonplaceness. Why, you can learn to cook a meal or sweep a house, and we always had servants to do that! And I suppose one *could* learn to make gowns. I can design beautiful things; Eloise admits that I have some ideas there, but she thinks so much adornment foolish. And father considers nothing worth doing but grand epic poems. He knows Milton, most by heart, and the 'Course of Time' — I think that is awfully stupid, but Cowper's 'Sofa' has some very charming lines. When I grew a little older



— we had a governess — I began to read the things I liked best, and I just revel in those dainty little poems. They seem to set my brain in tune. Oh, I don't expect to be a real poet, but I do think I can write sweeter little things than some I see in print!"

"You must send me some of them," Leslie said, persuasively. "I'll try to get them, or at least *one*, in the *Miscellany*. We are on the lookout for geniuses."

"Oh, I should be afraid to! You seniors seem so high up. I don't suppose I shall ever be one, and father laughs at a woman's college degree. He was at Williamstown and had a year at Oxford. I can have two years here if I like."

"What studies interest you most?"

"I like history and literature. I'm just shocking in math., and I don't see any sense in some of the ologies. Why should you care about worms and insects and beasts being made, and what is inside of you, so long as it performs all its functions?"

"But if it shouldn't?" interrupted Helen with a questioning smile.



"Well, then, you have a doctor. That's what they are for," triumphantly. "I like beautiful things, and the trees are full of grace, most of the flowers, of color. I didn't like the gray sky yesterday; it always gives me the shivers."

"But you must be up in certain studies to pass. Electives are not merely what you like," suggested Leslie.

"Oh," airily, "I don't mind! I'm getting to like the girls very much. You see it's the pleasant society and taking part in the fun and hearing about other girls' lives, real lives. It doesn't seem as if mine ever had anything in it. I'm not commonplace, either."

"No, you are not!" responded Leslie. "And you ought to do some very good work in the world when you acquire the training."

"Oh, I don't care about the world — just a few of the people I love best! I want to please them."

She glanced up out of such eager, beseeching eyes that Leslie was much moved.

"Now," the senior began, "I'm going to send you home, because I see two girls who



belong to your hall, and you will have company. I am much pleased at meeting you, and we will have some more talks about the things we like best. I want you to really work over your Latin verses, and you may send me some of the little poems you write — just about four verses; that is the size of the critic editor's patience."

"Oh, how delightful you are! I'm so glad Miss Grant asked me to come. Thank you for all the advice."

Leslie beckoned to the two freshmen and put her in charge, and the good nights were most cordial.

"She belongs to a charming, rather inconsequent type of character," Leslie said with a smile, "quite sensitive to some influences, and indifferent to others. She hasn't much vanity; she loves poetry; whether she has real genius remains to be seen. So many girls go through this experience. I wrote verses in my freshman year."

"Truly verses?"

"Yes, verses, not poems. I was an ardent lover of several of our so-called younger poets,



and I found my poetic afflatus was imitating them. Then I stopped."

"I don't see any sense in trying to make a student do what is impossible," said Helen, rather lugubriously. "But," brightening, "I can do the Latin excellently. I have the foundation there."

"I think it fortunate we are not all poets or novelists or painters. Oh, this lay heavy on my heart when I came into the room! I had a note from Mrs. Denman, Lorraine was so anxious that she should write. The child has an attack of pneumonia, not very serious, but the fever is rather stubborn, and you can never tell about the first. So there is little chance of her getting back under two months."

"Oh, that is too bad! We were beginning to be such friends. And a vacant room next to you —"

"I would like to come and take it. Let us both pray for her recovery, and keep an eye on our budding poet to see that the pickles and caramels and olives and cheese of midnight revels do not send her to the other extreme, though she shudders over everything in Poe



except 'Annabel Lee,' which is a very good thing for her immature years. She isn't a day over sixteen in intellect. And now, good night."

Helen ran over an exercise and then she read the prayer for a sick person, but the tears came to her eyes at the sentence, "Or else give her grace so to take thy visitation that after this painful life ended—" No, she couldn't have Lorraine's life ended when there was so much to live for.

Two days later Miss Chardavoyne waylaid her in exercise hour.

"I want you to see what was said about my Latin. And I *did* try. I wrote it over and over, spending a whole evening upon it."

Her face was flushed, her tone tremulous, and the eyes limpid as if surcharged with a flood of tears. Helen read the comment:

"Write over. Conception and treatment excellent, but refined to weakness in some lines. To be made stronger."

"Well, I think that pretty good. How many copies did you make?"



"Oh, five or six, parts of ones!"

"Have you saved them?"

"I'm not sure," hesitatingly.

"I'd like to see them. We will go to your room presently. I'm afraid you did weaken them, and you lost the fine temper of the old race."

"You see it couldn't be a translation exactly."

"Yes, I understand. And I'll tell you for consolation that I had some of my exercises too rough, at first."

"Oh!" There was a touch of joyous relief in the tone.

"You've had other exercises sent back? It is a kind of freshman's luck, discipline. You are just beginning college relations. It's different from a governess, or even boarding-school. But the farther you go, the better you like it."

"If you didn't have to study so hard every day," regretfully.

"Why, there is Saturday and Sunday," smilingly.

"And I spent all last Saturday correcting



and doing things over. The girls went in town and had a jolly time."

"One gets used to study," comforted Helen.

"Didn't you have any bad times?" was the almost reproachful inquiry.

"I guess I was a born student." She saw herself again the little girl sitting on Mrs. Dayton's stoop studying for a high school examination, and Mr. Warfield — where was he? Had he gained some of the things on which he had set his heart?

She went over the fragments with Miss Chardavoyne, who had taken out several of the stronger adjectives, and really emasculated parts of lines.

"But it doesn't sound so beautiful," she said in a disappointed tone.

"Not to you, perhaps, but a professor views it with a different eye. Now send it in tomorrow and take the result philosophically."

"If it is a better verdict, it will be owing to you."

And very encouraging it certainly was. For reward Helen received a poem in her honor



that transformed her into a Greek goddess, with hands dropping gifts to her worshipper.

Miss Brooks looked it over thoughtfully.

"Your modernity has spoiled it, Helen," and she gave a soft laugh. "It should be Strephon to Phyllis. Would she be annoyed if I were to ask her to recast it, and explain why? There are some real lovers' sentiments in it. The *Miscellany* has not had anything like this in a long time. We have had autumnal verses and climbing heights and dead flowers and blighting east winds. The only first-class thing was about the soldier who died on his march to the sea, you remember. It was copied in the *Bedford Weekly*."

"Oh, do talk to her about it! And I wish she wouldn't put me up on such a pedestal. I feel foolish."

"This is the penalty for ardent admiration. No girl ever fell in love with me to such an extent."

"She may, presently. They fall desperately in love with Carol Saybrook, or she draws them by some occult process. Then — I don't know whether she drains them dry, or tires of



them, or longs for fresh fields — but she gently drops them. They are in her room sipping tea, chatting, examining her pretty articles, and then — they drop out and it is some one else. She *is* fascinating, I suppose, but not really lovable. Some girls are positive studies. It is a good thing, I dare say; it prepares you for the greater world. I think one learns not to expect so much and not to be so deeply disappointed in people.”

Miss Brooks asked the young poet to her room one evening, keeping herself at leisure, and laid before her a plan for the usefulness of the poem.

“But I didn’t mean it for that,” Shirley protested. “It was because — did you ever know of a girl falling in love with another girl?” and the pretty face flushed scarlet, the eyes were wistful with emotion. “I love Miss Grant. I can’t tell you why, only I do. If I was boundlessly rich, I’d ask her to share my whole life; I’d lavish everything upon her as lovers do.”

“You silly child!” The tone was soft, the smile had no irony in it. “Sometime you



will settle to a cordial liking for Miss Grant, and you may be excellent friends, but you must not waste all your energies dreaming about her. There are greater problems for you to wrestle with, for after all, I think you will not purposely bring disrespect upon college training. Consider if you do not owe it attention, at least."

"But I'm not going in for wisdom," with a faint smile. "Why, I couldn't understand some of the abstruse demands! I don't care about the grand system of the universe, for I shall live in only a little place, and I want to be happy and have some one — oh! several people — love me and talk over things with me that I enjoy! And Plato and Aristotle — oh, yes! I like the *Phædo*, but I don't understand it, and I don't see what good it did to have Socrates die. I always want to cry over that."

"And you had no real motive in coming to college?"

"Why — yes. I wanted to be with a great lot of girls. And I do like it ever so much. But Helen Grant is a bright particular star,



so much above me in strength and knowledge that I can worship her without asking much back. Perhaps I can't make you understand. I used to try with Eloise, but you see she had a lover and thought that was the only thing to life, and her ideal was having a pretty home and making all manner of furnishings for it."

Reasoning with her at present would be in a circle. Leslie had never met just such a girl. She was not silly, though romantic.

"To come back to the poem: Strephon is inditing it to Phyllis among the flowery meads, and she must answer instead of dreaming."

"But Phyllis —" and the girl colored scarlet. "It is such a darkey name. Helen is strong and splendid."

"And they are both Grecian. Let us see now. Sit down here."

She took her pencil and crossed out some lines, writing on the margin what she would like substituted.

"You are very musical," she said. "And you know a busy senior going in for some of



the honors wouldn't spend her time over a freshman unless she thought there was something to her. You must take that for a compliment. Now dream this out to-night, or to-morrow night, and give it to me Saturday morning. If you want to save your Helen copy intact, do so, and five years from this read it over and tell me what you think of it then."

Shirley gave a long sigh.

"I really *do* want the copy of Phyllis," and the tone was persuasive, almost entreating.

"You are very good." Shirley's voice trembled a little, and the humid softness came into her eyes, as she passed out of the room.

"I do wonder if it was wise," Miss Brooks ruminated. "There are so many half-fledged poets in the world, so many who can write an averagely good story or essay, and yet never come up to any eminence. But they marry, and happily that settles it. Only it is really funny that her star of light should be Helen."

Saturday morning the editors of the *Miscellany* sat in solemn conclave. Essays had



been chosen, there were two bright stories, some excellent jokes.

“There is one really good poem. Here are four that run in the same strain. I wonder if old Mother Nature ever gets tired of hearing herself praised. There’s a space for four verses, four lines each. Two of these are too long. Girls, I’m never going to edit a paper or a magazine, if I go out washing for my daily bread and a bottle of olives. I’m disgusted.”

“Read this aloud,” said Miss Brooks. “Let us hear how it sounds.”

Miss Cairns took the paper, skimmed it over, and then read the poem in a very expressive voice. The staff had been leaning their elbows on the table, but at the second verse they straightened up, and began to pay attention. A silence followed, and they glanced at each other like a party of conspirators.

“Where did you unearth that, Miss Brooks? Is it truly original, or copied out of some volume of old poems? It is charming and so melodious. Why —” in great surprise.



"Oh, Miss Brooks did it! It is the expiring effort of genius before she bids a final adieu to her Alma Mater. Confess now!" exclaimed the secretary.

"I cannot tell a lie, even to win fame, and I have no hatchet to back me up," Leslie rejoined, laughingly.

"Well — it's good and it goes in. Its freshness is a godsend. Our poets have fallen into a rut, or else they are working to win the prize. It smacks of groves, long since deserted by simple-minded lovers, and turned into factories or oil refineries where Strephon gets soiled and coarse. *Is it original?* Deceive me at your peril."

"I saw it cast and recast; I hammered at the poet until she brought it into shape; and it is from a freshman."

"Oh, I can guess! The girl with the long light curls, tied up gracefully, who always looks as if she was posing. I heard her talking one day about the impalpable, the intangible, and what not. She never used a short word where a trisyllable could be made to do duty."



"But this hasn't a long word in it. The very simplicity is charming. You are sure you can answer for it, Leslie?"

"Quite certain, since I saw it rewritten a time or two, and much changed."

"I like that better. I haven't much faith in these things dashed off in a moment, unless the writer has been shaped up by years of practice and experience. Thank you, Leslie, for your discovery. How everybody will be guessing. This month's *Miscellany* has been the trial of my life. Only four more, three for real work, one may say."

"O dear! Think how soon some of us will be going different ways. College spoils you, after all. You get so used to cloistered shades — that sounds poetical, doesn't it? And now, Leslie, before we get lugubrious, tell us about your discovery."

"It was Helen Grant's, rather than mine; a Miss Shirley Chardavoyne, freshman, Virginian, a slim, rather pretty girl, with large, dark, moving eyes, as if she implored you not to judge her too harshly."

"Well, I suppose she *is* a genius. She isn't



much of a scholar, and is the trial of Miss Van Meter's morning. I've seen her with Miss Grant."

"Girls, when the maga. is out we must give her a little spread. I wonder if she will do anything else as good. Oh, do you remember Rose Harding, who wrote those curiously weird poems, and last year's chief lauded her to the skies? And then they found them more or less plagiarisms."

"She came from a Western college. Perhaps she had done it there."

"Well, we can be dismissed. The last pages may go to the printer's hands. Oh, compeers, I suppose some time in the future we will take out our old *Miscellanies* and give a sigh for the happy days together, forgetting the infelicities, the tears, and heart-breaks, the withering comments, the midnight headaches near the close of the year! I'd just as leave live it all over again. *Vale! vale!*" and she rose waving her hand.

Leslie took the pleasant news to Helen. "But you are not to say a word until she sees it in print. And she is to have a welcome in



the charmed circle afterward. I wish she cared more for scholarship."

"The sophomores insist that I should go on their sleigh-ride, and I have consented. I begged an invitation for her."

"Go off and have a good time. Next year, you will be full of anxieties."

"If I should pass," laughing.

"As you will, if you don't waste too much time. But one has a curious feeling when one faces the fact that it is all over."

There were three big sleighs, and the girls crowded in, sitting on the straw between the knees of those on the seats. It was a fine sunny afternoon with a crisp air. Great sheets of unbroken snow sparkled like diamond fields, as the last of the storm had been fine rain and sleet. They were merry enough, singing college songs, and yet a strange pensiveness pervaded Helen. This year *was* different; there was a greater intellectual seriousness, individual preference for qualities that attracted her, instead of a sort of general approval that she had considered a duty. She was almost sorry she had skipped a year.



Tired and sleepy from the change of out-of-doors air to the drowsy warmth, she went straight to her room after chapel. There were several letters. She saved Willard Bell's until the last. Truth to tell, she felt a little piqued at his long silence. He often wrote two letters to her one, and she had waited some time. She had not wanted to invite him for Christmas.

The letter was dated at New Orleans. The senior partner of the firm had been called thither to disentangle a matter in which there was a large amount of money, as well as tracts of real estate that had long been in litigation. Willard had been asked to go as secretary and stenographer, and he hoped before his return to get to Bermuda. The news from Daisy was not encouraging. There had been some talk of German baths, but the doctor had forbidden any journeying about. They were delightfully situated, and had met some friends — indeed, there was coming and going continually. And Laurence Hollis had accepted a call to a pretty, old, new town, Vernon Park, where there was much culture and refinement, the beautiful old



ways holding their own against the new. There was a select academy for girls, a fine library that had been donated by several public-spirited citizens, a stone church that had lately been renewed, but not spoiled, and a most cosy rectory. The clergyman of the last twenty years had insisted on retiring from active life. Mr. Hollis would go shortly after Christmas, was probably there now, and they would be delightfully situated. It was just the thing for Marjorie, the nice society where her accomplishments would not be allowed to rust. The mission station had been very well to try one's prentice hand on, but Hollis could come up to finer heights. And they would not be very far from the Townes, who were rejoicing in a little son.

Then there were pages about the old city that was still half-French and Spanish. It was such a bright friendly letter, so little about his feelings, but full of enjoyment, that Helen's heart some way warmed to him as it had not done in a long while. She must write to him; he could not tell when he should be back, and he might take a trip to Bermuda. Travelling



about was one of the most inspiring enjoyments.

How the days flew by! Easter was beginning to be talked about. There were two concerts with their practice, Easter Sunday music, and the glee club. They all said, "Oh, we want your voice!" And after Easter the out-of-door pleasures would begin. Helen was hungry for green and growing things; the pines and firs and hemlocks seemed unsympathetic in their winter garb. But oh, there were tough exercises and problems to wrestle with, and girls to help out of the Slough of Despond! She wondered sometimes why girls who had so much in their lives should get blue and despondent when they *could* study. Of course there were indifferent girls who were not anxious about their record and who never expected to be seniors.

If she had written the verses herself, Helen could not have been so full of satisfaction as when she saw Shirley's poem in print. One of the rules was that no name was attached to the articles. They were guessed at, and ad-



mitted afterward, and every contributor had a right to claim her own.

“Why, this suggests some of the old English poets,” said a senior. “It is dainty and sweet, a perfect pastoral. Is it Ray Stannard, think? Once in about three months, she has a delicious inspiration.”

“And she has sense enough not to cudgel her brain between whiles. Poets can’t be hammered out like gold leaf; they get too awfully thin.”

Helen took the paper to Miss Chardavoyne’s room and found her in tears over two returned exercises. One had the two black diagonal lines, and was good for nothing; the other began well, but two-thirds had to be gone over.

“Oh, I am so glad to see you!” She sprang up and flung her arms about Helen’s neck impulsively, laid her head in the arch between cheek and shoulder, and cried, to the detriment of Helen’s fresh stock.

“I can’t do it! I can’t! Will I be sent home in disgrace, I wonder? And I’ve come to like it so. I’ve heard of high-up schools



where they took parlor boarders; isn't there any such thing in colleges? I tried and tried over those geometry problems until I felt myself turning into all kinds of many-sided things and my brain nearly burst. Not one of them was right. Are there not some people who *can't* learn certain things? And what use will they be to me?"

"Do not take it so hard. Was nothing well done?" asked Helen, in a cool, tranquillizing tone.

"Oh, that about Greek art! But you see, I really love that. And then the *Anabasis*, but I'd read the translations so much; only I'm not very expert in Greek writing. And French grammar was 'Passable. Go over again.' I'm willing to stay in the freshman class, if I only squeeze through, but they were talking last night about girls that had been dropped."

"We will go over the geometry. It is hard for an unmathematical brain," smiling.

Shirley began to mop up her eyes. "You're my good angel, and yet you refuse the adoration I *can* offer. Even the Greek gods were



not so cruel as that," and a gleam of sunshine began to break over the child-face.

"Here is something that may comfort you. I think it a great compliment. I had one article in my freshman year, and one this December. You may do quite as well."

She began with a puzzled look, glanced at Helen incredulously, then read on, and a radiance illumined her countenance, her lips quivered, her eyes grew moist, it seemed, with both pain and pleasure struggling in them.

"They are my verses and they aren't. It's the poem you and Miss Brooks made me write. And I'd rather have mine to you, for that came from my very heart. You see, I don't care what Strephon said to Phyllis; they're not my people at all. They don't touch my soul. Is it the soul that enjoys? Since that lesson in physiology about the heart and the circulation, you can't have a bit of romance about it, or really believe any sentiment comes out of it. Science is just going to spoil everything beautiful in life," she said, in a dissatisfied, complaining tone.



"And you are not a bit grateful for this compliment?"

"Oh! is it a compliment?" She looked bewildered.

"I suppose you never had anything printed before?"

"Why, no! I never dreamed any one would care until I could write something really splendid. I didn't suppose any one would want to print a little thing like that! It isn't as fine as that first one."

"But you see general readers are not so much interested in personal admiration."

"Why, I didn't care to have any one know it, but just you. That was the charm."

"You are a little dear!" exclaimed Helen, warmly, touched by the abnegation of self. "Some day, if you cultivate your talent, you will understand all these necessary points that give delicate flavors. And when you have a lover, he may be glad of this poetic adoration."

"If one could write Portuguese sonnets to him! But he would have to be Browning to inspire one."

What a curious compound she was. Was it



real genius? Helen's knowledge of geniuses was limited.

"Well — what am I to do? Go to these magazine people and thank them on my bended knees?"

A sense of mirth quivered about her rosy lips. She had the sunny temper of a June day, and the drifts of wounds or hurts dissolved like the airy clouds in the sky.

"No. You will no doubt hear from the editorial corps. And now if you can come down to every-day, troublesome things, suppose we look at the geometry."

"Oh, please do not think me ungrateful! It was a lovely thing for you and Miss Brooks to do, and I do not know what to say," in bewilderment.

"Then let us devote the known and unknown quantities to problems."



## CHAPTER VIII

### IN A STRAIT BETWIXT TWO

MISS CHARDAVOYNE was cordially invited to Miss Minturn's room to a tea at eight o'clock on Tuesday evening. She came to Helen with the note in her hand.

"Miss Minturn is editor-in-chief of the *Miscellany*, and we are all sure she will be on the honor list, and no doubt have one of the essays. Of course, it is about the poem."

"But I am frightened. I don't know any of the high-up girls, except Miss Brooks and a Miss Weeks who came from Petersburg. And — what am I expected to do? Oh, can you go?"

"Of course, your sponsors will be there," replied Helen, laughing in a pleasant, friendly manner. "And you have only to be your natural self; it is no formidable ordeal. The seniors make a good deal of allowance. They



have been on the foundation lines themselves."

"And how shall I dress?"

"Wear something pretty and poetic. You have a soft, pale green gown that makes you look like a naiad, only I believe they have yellow hair."

Shirley had an incomprehensible fit of shyness as she entered. Miss Minturn's room was quite large and handsomely furnished with the trophies of four years of college life. She was rather tall, with fine contours, and had been a renowned athlete in her junior days, but she smiled out of clear, hazel eyes as she proffered her hand to Shirley and then introduced her to the assembled group.

There was a touch of arch, deprecating sweetness in the young girl's face, and grace being her birthright, even the strangeness did not make her awkward.

"We are so glad to discover you," began Miss Minturn. "I had no idea those charming verses were from so young a poet. I hope you will fulfil the promise given in them, but



you must remember that the climb up Parnassus is rather steep."

"Maybe it is best not to keep your eyes fixed on the very top, you might get dizzy. And the meadows and fields have the most bloom and the warmest welcome. I am not so ambitious; I should only care to write for those" — who appreciate me, she was about to say, but hesitated and substituted, "liked me."

"The modesty of a true poet. Come over here; I want to talk to you —"

"She goes round the circle first," interrupted Miss Minturn. "She is the guest of honor this evening, and you cannot monopolize her and drain her dry. It will not make a poet of you," laughed the hostess.

"Surely I am content to be the plain prose of this august body. But if some day you should see me amassing a fortune by writing advertisements, how you will regret having flouted me in my unsophisticated youth."

"Hear! hear!" and another rapped on the table.

Shirley made the rounds of the young



women, who did not seem so formidable after all. Their laughs precluded all idea of stiffness. She seated herself next to Helen, but the girl who had spoken for her came over and pushed her companion on the other side a little, squeezing herself in beside her.

"I am always anxious to know how verses are written," she began, in a complaining tone, as if she had been wronged out of some qualification. "I have a long list of words that rhyme, but the puzzle is to get the beautiful ideas to go in between. College ought to supply them, but it doesn't."

Shirley looked amazed an instant, then the face above her softened to a smile and set the girl at ease. She felt at once the atmosphere of refinement, instead of the crudeness of the freshmen; it was of the quality she had been accustomed to and was native air.

She had lived and revelled in poetry. No, she had never been away from home except on visits, and she was not quite sure how much she liked college. If it was not for the awful tasks! Oh, she wrote the things that came to her, but she had never thought of having



them praised! Her father considered two or three verses of no account; just a whiff of a passing breeze.

"Did he set you at reading ponderous Milton?" asked another of the seniors. "It would be harnessing a butterfly to a cart."

"But I liked L'Allegro," she interposed. "Father hasn't much opinion of a girl's intellect, and thinks he doesn't care for women's books, but he reads George Eliot. He took up Greek with me, but was disgusted. I revel in the translations, but I think I shall not go on with the language, French is so much easier."

"But about the verses. I'm interested in the beginning of things, in the first exquisite thrill —"

"Oh, stop your nonsense and don't tease the child! Your poem was dainty and lovely, new and fresh, and we were glad to have it. You might venture upon another if you can do as well."

"If you were older and wiser we might accuse you of knowing about Strephon under another name. Did some one tell you a



charming love-story, or did you just imagine it?" asked another.

Shirley turned a bewitching rose color. Helen's heart came up in her throat lest Shirley should overstep discretion, but the regard for her ideal was too sacred to be brought out to promiscuous eyes.

Miss Minturn made some tea that diffused a fragrance through the room, and brought out a few dainties. Her china was the envy of more than one, and she didn't always display her rarest cups that had been sent her from many quarters of the globe. To-night she was generous. They drank to Miss Char-davoyne's future success; they passed best wishes around, and if there was a famine in the absolute wisdom that might be supposed to emanate from seniors who were on their way to degrees, it was made up by the outflow of fun and jests that were cast around with the harmlessness of confetti.

The good night was most cordial. Leslie and Helen escorted their guest to her hall.

"It was just charming, like the evenings mamma sometimes tells about. After the first,



I didn't feel at all afraid, though they must all be wise young women if they can pass those awful examinations. I was looking over the official circular and I'm glad I didn't start to go through. I should get buried in oceans of knowledge that would never be the slightest good to me. You have both been lovely, and I thank you."

"She is a rather curious compound, and certainly is well-bred and charmingly modest. Why, she didn't seem at all elated by the compliments and the interest that would have given some girls an attack of mental vertigo! I wish Lorraine had been here."

Helen echoed that. A few days later they heard from her. The pneumonia had not been severe, but she was to go to Florida for several weeks. It was too bad to lose all that time and to be out a year.

Helen missed her very much. There were other friends, to be sure, but she was learning that the interchange of thought and feeling, or even the commonplaces of an intimate acquaintance, took a good deal of time. She was willing to be helpful, but there were girls



who drained one, who took all, and gave nothing back.

Easter came with its glorious rejoicing, its grand music, its other side of college, tests and games, and now the strain began for the examinations. The commencement exercises were discussed, the grand field-day, the finals. The girls wondered who would win the freshman prize; half a dozen girls were in hot competition. Then the juniors had one to be awarded for the best essay on Shakespeare. Helen had wondered whether she should try. She had made some notes.

But one afternoon she was summoned to the students' parlor and surprised at the sight of Willard Bell. His grave face shocked her, and the black gloves he held in his hand struck a chill to her heart.

"Daisy!" she cried.

"Our dear Daisy has been brought home for the last time. They reached the city this morning, and will leave for the burial to-morrow. I did not see her alive, but she was so changed that I could hardly make our pretty darling out of her. And she was so resolved



to get better she would not hear a word of dying. So young, and with everything to live for! She really did seem better a fortnight before she went, then suddenly she dropped down. I was on my way to New York, and there father met me with the sad news. Then, as I said, mother and Mr. Duer returned with the body. And now they want you. You seem to take Daisy's place in father's heart, and you must not refuse him. Mother wishes it, too. There is a train by which we can reach the city at ten if you can get ready in an hour."

Helen made an effort to speak, but her throat filled up and her eyes were heavy with pain, rather than tears. It seemed heartless not to have been thinking through all these weeks of Daisy, the radiant, eager, wilful little queen. Had her marriage been very happy, Helen wondered. Had Mr. Duer been with her all the winter?

"We cannot take no, Helen." Willard rose as he said this. He seemed taller, more manly, with a much more vivid personality and strength than she had credited him with be-



fore. Yes, he had improved, in some indescribable manner he had gone beyond her; she felt that.

“Oh!” she cried, “I cannot tell you! I cannot express my sorrow! I have somehow been afraid of the end, but it did not seem so near. And we were such friends in our girlhood — at school —”

She had uttered this in broken sentences, and as the old memories rushed over her, the tears flowed.

“Yes; mother was very anxious you should come. There were some messages and — and gifts. Oh, they both want to see you so! Father is fairly heart-broken.” Then he took out his watch. “There is only an hour,” wistfully. “Will you get ready?”

There was a certain sound of gentle authority in his voice. Yes; she *must* go. Fortunately she had her thesis ready, her study of governments was almost completed and would not have to be sent in under a fortnight, and Goethe’s “Egmont” with Schiller’s sketch of Egmont’s life — oh, she could soon catch up



in the few matters, but they must not be considered just now! Love and duty both called.

"Then you must excuse me while I make arrangements," she said in a low tone, the traces of tears still in her eyes as she glanced up, and his were bent upon her with a new tenderness.

There were professors to see, explanations to be made, and to Miss Brooks she rehearsed a little of the story.

"Oh, wasn't that your friend's admirer? I remember now; they were at commencement. And a schoolmate. Is it the first break in your ranks of friendship? You are a fortunate girl. Yes; I'll see to the loose ends. And you'll be sure to come back in time to finish your work."

"By Monday, at the latest," returned Helen, with her good-by. "Tell Miss Char-davoyne how it was. She is at recitation. And tell some of the others."

Less than two years ago she had taken the same journey with Willard at Daisy's imperative summons. The pretty, sweet, captious lips were silent now; they would never speak



again. It was dreadful to go out of the world in youth. She could not imagine any one being even reconciled at that period. Death seemed for old age. And how few she had cared for had gone out of her life! One was her first friend, Mrs. Van Dorn, and that memory had been sweetened by time.

Willard was most attentive in an unobtrusive way. How manly he had grown; the boyish crudenesses seemed to have ripened and fallen off, leaving a serenity of mien, a finer outlook, a touch of tenderness that no longer needed words. His silence was very grateful to her, for she was brooding over the terrible side of death as it always appears to youth.

The darkness settled down; lamps were lighted. They whirled through cities where all was bustle and noise, with rows of still busy streets; small towns, with here and there a glow from some store; flying past stations with express speed; long reaches of darkness, towns again, rattling over bridges, echoing by rocky heights. The coach was not very full. Now and then a passenger came in or passed out. Then, as the silence seemed unsocial,



she spoke of his visit to New Orleans, and he was quite eloquent over the strange old town with its still picturesque inhabitants, of the great river rolling through it, the lake and delta, with the old legends.

“And Bermuda, I suppose, was beautiful, but one need not ask that.”

“A land of flowers. People going and coming continually. Gaiety and pleasure and health-seekers, and a charming climate. They had not meant to remain there, but they were delightfully situated and found some most agreeable Americans, two young girls full of health and spirits who were there with an invalid aunt who was very cheerful herself. Then she liked the young doctor who watched over her as a brother. Mr. Duer had one most excellent quality; he never was jealous. He liked Daisy to have hosts of friends and be admired. He took little trips off now and then; a young fellow with no special business habits and plenty of money must be in search of amusement most of the time. I really can't see why he married Daisy. A domestic life would have been so much better for her, and



he really didn't need a wife at all. Women were always making much of him. He was a great hand to get up pleasure parties. A friend lent him his yacht for a month and he took different ones cruising around. Water journeys did not seem to hurt Daisy, she really enjoyed sailing. And there were so many lovely islands about. I almost envied the fellow, but I wouldn't want a whole life of it. Daisy used to be taken around in a wheeled chair when I was there; it tired her to walk. And these two girls were so entertaining. Well, I do suppose she was happy and she really didn't think of dying in years to come. She counted on having a settled home some time. But mother knew. Poor mother! And father takes it very hard. He has always been especially fond of girls."

Helen was winking away the slow-gathering tears that would come. She was infinitely sorry for the life that had gone out, but it seemed as if she had had very little part in it. She tried to feel pained for herself, as if she had lost some worthy and lovely friendship. It had come very near that twice, and she was



thankful to recall it. She had grown much more discriminating; she could see that in herself. The exactness in many branches of study had given her a clearer and more accurate insight into character. She wished just now that she could not gauge so clearly. But she understood that the sunniness, the moods of sweetness, were as the events and people affected Daisy. She wanted her little world revolving about her until she was ready to let those who composed it drop out of her orbit, displace them by some one new. She gave for the return she got; there was nothing wide or generously outflowing in her nature, she never thought of making another happy, of radiating a living blessedness. Helen had seen devotion of girls in college, even back at school, where there was a certain equality of tenderness.

Now and then Willard inquired if she was comfortable. She was too stunned and sore to talk about Daisy and blamed herself for a certain hardness of heart.

They came into the station at length in the glare of lights and confusion. Mr. Duer was there with the carriage. He had grown some-



what stouter, and certainly was fine-looking, a splendid example of health and good breeding. Ah, it was no wonder Daisy, who was affected so by the outward and visible signs, should have loved him.

“Oh, Miss Grant!” holding her hand in a warm pressure, “I am so glad you could come. You will be such a great comfort to Mr. and Mrs. Bell. It is a sad time for us all, but we have been in a certain sense prepared for it. Daisy was delicate always, and possessed the intense nature that wears one out rapidly. She was very sweet and tender and won a great deal of love. She could not have lived without it.”

Then the brothers-in-law exchanged some conversation regarding the arrangements. The Newells had come in town; there would be church services at eleven in the morning; Daisy would be taken to Woodlawn; the Townes had a plot there, and his family had a large one, so they thought it better than the little country burying-ground.

Mr. Bell was down in the hall watching for



them. He simply took Helen in his arms and kissed her.

"We must have some supper," Willard said. "I am absolutely starved, and I think Helen must be, after the long journey."

"I ordered it before I went!" exclaimed Mr. Duer. "Come this way."

Mr. Bell sat by the table beside Helen. Mrs. Bell had gone to bed very much worn out. Helen found that she was hungry, but it was a silent meal, and then Mr. Bell with great tenderness conducted her to the room adjoining theirs.

"I am so thankful you could come," he said with his good night. "You seem like our very own."

The interview with Mrs. Bell the next morning was sorrowful indeed. She showed her fatigue plainly and seemed very delicate herself. Willard and Mr. Duer were very attentive to her, while Mr. Bell seemed to gravitate to Helen. Mr. and Mrs. Hollis came, and then the coaches took them to the church.

There in the front of the chancel stood the little mound covered with a black velvet pall.



A cluster of half-blown white roses lay on it in simple beauty. Helen could imagine Daisy asleep underneath in the silent mystery. It seemed as if she must come out of this tranquil rest. Where was she now? Would one feel alone in heaven?

The beautiful service was said over her with its solemn chants and inspired lessons, and then they moved slowly out, Willard escorting Helen, and took the last journey to the burial plot.

"It doesn't seem as if one is really dead until one is hidden away for the last time," Willard said in a low tone. "I don't know whether this is the usual feeling when you have lost some one dear to you, but it seems as if Daisy *must* come back, as if we should find her up home when we went there. You can't reconcile death with youth. It seems abnormal, even if it does occur so often."

The Newells were quite insistent that the Bells should spend a day or two with them. They had always been most cordial with Daisy.

"I am anxious to get home," Mrs. Bell said



in answer to the pressing invitation, as well as to that of her daughters.

"If you like, I will come up and stay awhile," said Marjorie.

"Come to-morrow," returned the mother.

There was spring in the air, although the sun was hiding under a soft roof of clouds. They turned away from the flower-covered mound and said a quiet good-by to each other. Helen realized that it was not possible to make the break of a return to college at once, though she felt that she ought to go. A soft spirit seemed brooding everywhere, the green herbage showed here and there a bloom, the early violets were pricking through, tiny leaves were hugging the brown twigs as if almost afraid to venture out, birds were twittering and consulting, and now and then one poured out a trill that seemed to shake the very air.

The house had been put in order by an efficient woman. There was a window filled with blooming flowers, everything was natural and homelike, as Helen remembered it. But how



long ago it seemed! Yes, she had loved Daisy then. Had she changed so herself?

After supper Mrs. Bell begged to be excused.

"I leave you in good hands," she said to Helen, with a faint smile. "To-morrow we will have our talk."

Willard lighted his cigar presently and sauntered out. His case would lose nothing by this advocate. He had a tender and son-like feeling toward both parents in their bereavement.

Helen sat silent for some moments. Then Mr. Bell motioned her beside him, and almost without volition, she rose and went.

He put his arm over her shoulder.

"I do not just understand how it is, Helen, but you seem so near, so like one of us. Daisy had other schoolmate visitors and they were nice girls, too, and they went out of our minds, but we talked of you so often. You impress yourself upon one with an unusual individuality, or else — yes, I think it is that — you fit in a niche that has stood empty waiting for you, and no other person could have filled it.



I wish you had been Daisy's cousin, then when your father died, I should have claimed you."

"You have always been so tender to me, so sympathetic." Her voice trembled a little and she could not help thinking of the place made for her, that she was reluctant to fill.

"I have never felt quite satisfied about Daisy's life," he went on after a pause, and there was a peculiar sound of sadness in his voice. "I think we indulged her too much, partly because she was not very strong, and partly because of her winsome, coaxing manner. Every one gave in to her at the end, sometimes against his better judgment. There is a responsibility in every close relation, and one cannot always see clearly to the end. If we could not trust in God and leave our burdens in His hands, we would go sorrowing all the rest of our lives."

"But her life had many joys in it. She gathered up a great deal of love on every hand."

"I never felt quite sure hers was the highest love that can come to a woman. The other girls seem perfectly mated. One's de-



light is the centre of a family; the other one is continually reaching out to sow some seed in the great world that shall bear fruit, four-fold, perhaps. They were so dissimilar, Daisy and Harlan Duer. He was always generous and indulgent to her, but he was a very thorough man of the world, and when he married he did not give up his old personal desires and pleasures. She could have her friends, her pleasures, her amusements, and he would take his. He gave just so much of himself; they were not one, but always two. Perhaps you knew we did not quite approve of the marriage. If we had thwarted it, and she had dropped down, gone into a decline, and died after a few years, we should have blamed ourselves severely. She had her desire, and it happened. I hope she never knew she was feeding upon husks, yet it was the best Mr. Duer had to give. Some women would not have minded, would have taken outside pleasures to fill up the craving, and they would have kept themselves morally good, too. But I think it fretted Daisy. She was right in believing a wife should be all to her husband,



not only a part of his life. I cannot think they were meant for each other in the great allotment, and yet it seems as if nothing could come to pass without God's guiding hand in it. My dear, I ought not sadden you with my misgivings — ”

“ Oh, I think Daisy must have been happy! ” she cried impulsively, wanting to comfort. Yet, she understood what was in the father's heart.

“ Do you know how dear you are to us, Helen? ” and Mr. Bell pressed her closer. “ But now you must tell me about yourself. We were so proud that you went in the juniors. One more year, and you will be through. You have been happy, I know. I hope you have not lost the romance of a girl's life. There is so much sweetness that buds along these years, and if it does not come to blossoming it withers slowly. I want you to have all the happiness of a true woman's life, and that is in loving and being loved. I need not ask if you have met friends. ”

Helen was quite enthusiastic about her hap-



penings, her standing, and her hopes for another year. Willard came in.

"It is raining a little," he said. "A gentle springlike rain, and an old line came into my mind:

" 'Blessed is the corpse that the rain falls on.' "

"Poor, dear Daisy," murmured the father.



## CHAPTER IX

### THE HIGH RESOLVES OF YOUTH

HELEN felt she ought to go the next day, but Mrs. Bell claimed her. The luggage had been sent up. Mr. Duer had refused utterly to keep any of the gifts he had made his wife, and there were some very beautiful ones. Daisy had spoken to her mother of several for Helen, and they had been made into a parcel with a number Mrs. Bell had added.

“I think she kept you nearer her heart than almost any one she knew. She was fond of variety, and often thought she saw more in people than there really was, as she found when she knew them well. But during those last weeks her heart turned to you. Of course it would not have been possible for you to give up your plans, nor necessary either, but your strength and energy were an inspiration to her. I wish, Helen, that it could have been



so that she had gone to college with you. Her health would not have permitted it, but I believe it tides many girls over those uncertain years and shapes character and matures judgment. There were two such charming girls at our hotel, and one enters college next year. I was so glad for Daisy to find friends."

And though Mrs. Bell was not as outspoken as her husband, Helen knew the marriage had not been pleasurable to her, though Mr. Duer had evinced a good deal of outward tenderness and indulgence through those later weeks. It had been a sad winter for the mother.

Mrs. Hollis came up at noon, and Helen spoke of her departure.

"Oh," Mrs. Bell said, with tears in her eyes, "how can I let you go? Yet, I must not be selfish in my grief. Helen, you are like a child to me, and now that I shall be more at liberty we must take up our correspondence again. You see I am spoiled by young girls and cannot give them up. I shall want to know how you progress. If it wasn't for your senior examinations I should insist upon keep-



ing you a month, at least. Then I shall count on you in vacation."

She was very dear to them, she knew.

Marjorie wanted her parents to spend the month with her in her new home, since it would be more convenient to the city and they were near the station. She was to remain all night, and it did make a little rift in the sad home-coming.

"You see," Willard said to her late that evening, "how necessary you are to all of us. Father really needs you. Think of the happiness it is in your power to bestow. Is there any better work in this world than making people happy? Is there anything nobler and sweeter and dearer than comforting those in sorrow, coming into the very heart of things, and to see stretching out before you possibilities of joy unfolding, to grow richer and tenderer by the using? Oh, Helen, I have been trying patience and silence, but the love remains! And now, oh, you cannot refuse!"

Helen had been in a tense and exalted state for the two days. Willard's quiet devotion had impressed her. Ought she not to consider



a return for all the affection these people had showered upon her? Was not this the deeper meaning, the higher duty, worth more than following out one's desires that would never quite satisfy? She was bewildered as the two paths spread out before her.

"Helen!" Willard came closer, his arms seemed to take her prisoner, even against her will, and yet she felt powerless to struggle.

Mr. Bell was crossing the hall.

"Father, join your pleading to mine, and tell this dear girl that she belongs to us, that we cannot let her go."

"Oh, wait! wait!" she cried. "I have been so occupied with other matters that I have had no time to consider. Love is such a sacred thing, and I know nothing about it —"

She was trembling in every pulse. There was a tumult in her heart, as if it were breaking. Could this be love? She glanced from one to the other with a blinding consciousness of having half-surrendered herself. She shrank from it, too, with a kind of terror.

"My child," Mr. Bell said, tenderly.



Willard drew her to him and kissed her.

"I must be free until I have graduated;" she made the protest in a tremulous voice, and seemed to push him away with her hands, but he was immovable. She felt his strength and power.

"Helen," the father said in a tender tone, "do not be overpersuaded into making a mistake. We all love you, we all want you, and you can fill the place of her who has gone. But you must do it of your own free will. Love is too sacred to have any counterfeit shadowing its face. Willard, you must give her time to consider. Let her come to you of her own volition."

Helen raised grateful eyes, but they were well nigh conquered by the longing she saw.

"Oh!" she cried, "I like you all so much. We have been such dear friends. But I am not ready even to promise. I do not understand myself."

"Let the matter rest here." The father's voice had a certain authority in it. "You are brave enough to admit love when it comes to you, and it has not come yet; I can see that.



But you can rest in the consciousness that nothing would afford us a greater joy. And now, my child, you look weary and we must say good night to you. I wish you were not going to-morrow, but each day would make the parting harder."

Willard uttered his good night reluctantly. Helen sped up the stairway, but she was not through with her trial. Mrs. Bell's sweet voice summoned her.

"My dear," she began, "your visit has not been a cheerful one. I understand how necessary your return is, yet in my heart I wish I could keep you. I shall count on you next summer. I think we have been thrown together for something more than ordinary friendship."

Helen's heart beat with unwonted emotion. She put the suggestive distance between the meanings she could not mistake, and her own indecision, which at the moment she considered unworthy of herself.

"Good night," she said, softly.

Just next to her chamber was Daisy's pretty girlhood room that had never been changed.



She was gone for all time. A passion of tears flooded Helen's eyes.

She was very glad Mrs. Hollis was to remain with her mother several days. It softened the pang of parting. Willard had to go down early in the morning, so there could only be a brief good-by. Mr. Bell took her to the station later. She was moved to tears at the tender blessing invoked upon her. Ah, if he had been her real father! If she had been born in this family, not more than two years older than Daisy! That would have been an ideal life.

A more self-seeking nature would have been flattered beyond measure by these preferences. She had once thought that to be an inmate of the Wilmarth household would have been a divine gift of Providence. And now the individual personality pervaded her, the curious self that could not be bent or turned save for a moment; it flew back like the string of a bow. She was Helen Grant again and she must go forward on her own path. Oh! could she find the right way? Daisy had loved passionately, but it had not brought



complete happiness to herself, and real satisfaction to any one.

It was soon after midday when she saw the massive arched gateway, with its inscription, and it seemed like coming to a well-loved home. She could have shouted out her satisfaction. No doubt a young fellow would have done so. The shadowy masses of evergreen on both sides were just sending out their exquisite, gray, furry tassels of new growth, and there was the avenue with its branching elms in tiniest leaves, the maples in blooming clusters, some perky and saucy with their red crowns, others holding down their heads, still others in fringy yellow green. Over yonder were the horse-chestnuts with their umbrella-like spread of leaves, great pansy beds, newly set out, daffodils in golden hues, narcissus, the sweetness of violets and new grass, the long stems of Java currant, the red and white of the japonicas. Would any other place afford her this intense satisfaction? She stood motionless, gazing about, and the soft under-roof of sky, with drifting blue and fleecy clouds, crowned it all exquisitely.



She paused again at the wide hall entrance. A group came flying through the corridor, grasping hand or arm, and uttering welcomes in various keys. Then she ran up-stairs.

"Oh, Helen!" It was Lorraine Denman, mysteriously changed somehow, but charming, with lustrous eyes and quivering lips. "I've hungered so for you. They didn't want me to come back, but I longed to see the girls. I can't pass, of course, and it breaks my heart to think I shall not be able to go in the seniors with you. But we must keep our friendship, whatever betides;" and her face was radiant with the purpose.

"You don't look as if you had been ill," said Helen in joyous surprise.

"It's mostly a case of what might have been, but didn't come to pass. To tell the truth, I wasn't real well when I went away. I studied hard to make up for the time spent in pleasure. I had some cold and a fever that the doctor was afraid would be typhoid. They were nearly scared to death, and father was about to send a long list of inquiries here about all the sanitary conditions. Then the



fever let up. I was on the highroad to return when pneumonia set in, and there was another scare. I did have quite a dreadful cough, and stitches all over me when I breathed. Then the stitches dropped out, and the cough wore away, and father trotted me off to Florida, where I had the loveliest time, and I'm well and sound, ready for larks and study. That is all of this strange moving history."

Helen laughed at the gaiety. It was infectious.

"And you've been having a sorrowful time. Here is a queer little bit. There was a mother and daughter at our hotel who had been spending a month at Bermuda and knew your friends quite well. They admired Mrs. Bell very, very much. They thought Mr. Duer splendid, but rather gay, quite devoted to the pleasure of ladies, only he liked a crowd of them. There was not any talk about him;" and she flushed warmly, "that is, I mean scandal. And he was sweet to his wife, only she was ill and fretful. They thought she had been very pretty. There was always



a little court about her, for she had the most elegant clothes and jewels. It must have been awfully hard for her to die! I suppose she was charming when she was well. I've quite resolved if I am ever ill a long while to be just as lovely as possible, like some of these 'shut-ins' you read about and every one admires. Oh! are you not glad to come back? I'm afraid college does spoil girls a little bit" — archly. "There are so many of us here, and we have such good times, that it seems lonesome at home."

There was a rush of steps and taps on the door, which was pushed wider open, as a bevy of girls entered.

"The light of the recitation rooms has flickered sadly," declared one.

"We, who salute you, are glad to get you back in time for the meets and the contests of all sorts. You're entered for the basket-ball, and remember that midge of a Betty Garnier will be your dearest foe — sworn rival, in plain English."

"And we've put you up for one of the



dashes. Could you run the two-hundred heat?"

"And you juniors are to give us a rousing reception, you know. I hope you will leave some of the fruit of the tree of knowledge behind tucked away in crannies and corners, provided you haven't squeezed it too dry. Is it most like apples or oranges?"

"O dear!" Helen dropped down on a seat. "You *are* a merry lot! And there are the exams!"

"I have heard it was a good plan not to cross bridges until you come to them," said another sententiously. "I think that wisdom dates back to the Ark."

"It has the flavor of antiquity."

"It is only those things that have survived the wrack of years that have any value."

"There was once an explorer who unearthed a toad that had been buried a thousand or so years. He was alive. He was only a toad after all."

"An antique, certainly."

"Girls, will you allow me to unpack my luggage, and turn my attention to some of the



great questions of life?" Helen asked laughingly.

"Come in to my tea after chapel. I have some problems that will make your hair stand on end and are warranted to turn it white in a single night."

"No temptation. Make it a pale gold and naturally wavy."

But they tramped down the corridor still laughing and bursting into snatches of song.

"I must see Miss Morse and Miss Van Meter," Helen began, "and learn how far I have fallen behind."

"Oh, Helen — if you only could —"

A beseeching smile irradiated the sweet face, and the wish spoke in the eyes.

"And disappoint Professor Blake when he has been so good to me! I'm almost sorry I hurried up so. But there could be a post-graduate course."

Helen began to busy herself with putting the contents of her suit-case in their places. She took out her box of gifts tenderly and laid it in her trunk; she could not go over



them now, and she wondered if she would ever want to wear them.

Then Miss Brooks came in with her welcome, which was most cordial. Helen found she had not fallen much behind. Everybody seemed very generously inclined. There was dinner and chapel, then she went in to the Association meeting, and heard the last month's reports, the discussions upon the different branches of charitable work they had taken up, and which would make the most satisfactory showing at the close of the year.

"I think it ought to be which has done the most *real* good. There is the little girl in the Mission school at Beirut. The subscriptions *have* fallen off this year. It was a junior undertaking, but you can't really pledge yourself for new girls," and the speaker glanced around.

"The George, Jr. Republic is my pet. I've joined with several friends, and two or three clubs in my town are caring for a street arab who is turning out very well. Of course, they ask their friends for contributions."

"There ought to be Lent at least three



times a year, when we should get into the mood of making sacrifices, giving up — ”

“ Fudge and caramels and buttercups and jelly rolls and candied fruit and — ”

“ And running into Bedford for a blowout, just as if we didn't have enough to eat here.”

“ Are we really learning to fill broader and finer places in the world? ” said another girl seriously.

“ We are supposed to be fitting ourselves for it, for helping to uplift a little. Yet we seem to think a great deal about ourselves, and our pleasures, and that is not the training for a really useful life.”

“ I wonder how it would be if we took up one idea and worked resolutely upon it. Some one once said that if every person in the world set out to make another happy, the world would be transferred into a Paradise.”

“ False reasoning, though it has the ring of philanthropy. Everybody can't. There would be no one left to accept your good deeds.”

“ Then the millennium would come in



earnest. We do not try very hard. I think that about taking up the duty nearest is a good idea. Things do sometimes come right in your way. They are unpleasant, or what we call commonplace, so we shirk them and go off to a more attractive work, and maybe there is no real virtue in it. We ought to weigh matters more accurately. That is what a college training is for."

There was a diversity of views and it was a good thing to interchange them. Lorraine and Helen walked to the Hall together and declined the tea invitation.

"You look tired," Lorraine began. "And I promised father I would go to bed at ten. I'm beginning to find how much tenderness there is in a father's love. I always thought that quality belonged almost exclusively to mothers. We are not living up to what is best in us, unless you do, Helen."

"No, I do not," and Helen flushed. "I promised to look over those problems, and I dare say the poor girls are hammering their brains without making a single spark of light fly. I'm all wrought up on the subject of



duties, so I had better go if I want to sleep the sleep of the just. Good night, dear."

"Helen, kiss me. Could I ever be to you what that poor, pretty Daisy was? For—I love you very much."

"I think in many respects you could be more. I am very glad to have your love."

"Thank you."

The problems were pretty tough, but Helen cheered the discouraged girls with her energy and brightness. Then she was so tired that she resolutely shut out all other thoughts and was soon asleep.

There followed very busy days; and such glorious afternoons that one positively could not stay in, even if a text-book had to be taken for a mentor. The basket-ball courts were thronged with girls practising; others were flying over hurdles. There was field-day, the grand out-of-doors concert, and all the other events that preceded commencement.

Helen had letters from both Mr. and Mrs. Bell, which were tenderly sweet. Mrs. Bell had gone to Marjorie's, and was pleased be-



yond measure with the new home, the pretty, refined, old town, and the church. She was getting much rested, but the spring days and the warm weather gave Mr. Bell a degree of lassitude that made them all very anxious. They were both counting on her vacation and the pleasant summer they would have. She must let nothing interfere. She kept Willard's letter two days before she opened it. Up to this time she had resolutely put out of her mind the more serious aspect of the case, but now she was compelled to face it. It was not the boyish entreaty of a year ago, but a calm adjustment, a love-letter with the promise of patient waiting, a restful assurance that all would go well. He was going to make his life and his position worthy of her. There were some rhapsodies, to be sure, but he would not have been a lover if he had not indulged in them.

Oh, what had she said? What had she promised? The remembrance of that night was confusing. She had asked him to wait, and he was waiting in a manly fashion. The letter was eloquent with a certain tender as-



surance that somehow exercised an influence over her that she could not explain to herself. She was not ready for such fevers; she wanted girlhood years longer. Was her nature abnormal? Did study leave little play for natural feelings? Other girls discussed lovers, sighed for them. Miss Bradshaw's counsel haunted her; it was applied to another, to be sure, but she could take it to herself.

How the days ran on with their striving and heartburning! She was not trying for any superior standing. There were two girls in the class who were doing fine work, and she would not rival them, even if she could.

Miss Chardavoyne had sent her a dainty packet of poems, exquisite little love poems, intended for no eye save her own. It did interest Helen as a kind of psychological problem. If she had been aggressive, Helen could have snubbed her for a foolishly romantic girl. Even if she had treated her to expressions of devotion, with upraised eyes, singled her out, waylaid her, clasped her hand on every occasion — she had seen these pronounced endearments among girls and rather despised them



in what she considered her maturity of wisdom — she could have done so. But Shirley Chardavoyne held herself a little aloof, was pleasant and sociable with other girls, but not effusive. The chief of the *Miscellany* staff declared she could not make her out.

“You don’t suppose that dainty little thing was a sort of plagiarism that she had labored over until she really believed it her own?” she said to Helen. “Miss Brooks is so full of graduation papers she can’t pay attention to a poor little freshman, and I can’t make anything out of her. I wanted her to send in a poem for our last number, just two verses, and she said she had been so full of the prose of study she couldn’t think of poetry. I never saw a rhymester with such a small modicum of vanity.”

And Helen had just the needed poem lying in her desk!

“She is a queer sort of child and follows out the whim that seems to cross her mind. I haven’t had time to study her myself.”

“This is my last opportunity, you know,” she said, smiling and nodding as if approving



herself. "I've discovered three poets in my stay here, and this obdurate little thing might have been the fourth."

Helen sought Shirley out. "No, not one of the poems shall be sown broadcast. They are for your eyes alone."

"You will come back next year?" and Helen's voice had a pleading touch in it as she smiled into the soft, adoring eyes.

"I'm quite sure I'll be allowed to. I've studied and had some tutoring, and Miss Grayson was positive my standing would allow that. It would be just awful to be dropped. As I said at first, I never expect to achieve the seniors. But since you will be here next year, I want to come also."

"And I will try to do better for you. I do like you very much. I should be sorry to stop here. It would be an unfinished poem," and there was a kind of caressing cadence in her voice that warmed the young heart.

"Oh, I am so glad! For when anything is finished it must stop."

"But if it comes to full fruition, it may bring happiness to both."



Shirley seized her hand suddenly and kissed it with rapture. Helen pressed her lips to the fair forehead.

Miss Brooks was one of the honor girls, and had an essay on the uses of education. She was very much engrossed, but she confided to Helen that she had determined to return for another year. She could not resolve to bid dear *Alma Mater* a final good-by.

"There are some higher branches I am much interested in, and I want to see how you and Lorraine prosper, as well as that queer little Chardavoyne girl. And now that I've nothing on my mind —" she gave a half-sigh and ended abruptly, but Helen knew to what it referred.

"I'm disappointed in you, though. I thought you'd try for something," Leslie said after a pause.

"I thought I would just keep within the ranks this year. I've been learning a good many things," and a grave sort of sweetness shone in her eyes.

"You are not discouraged about anything. Your standing is excellent — I've learned



that," with a gleam of pleasure lighting her face. "But I did hope you would take up that Shakespeare essay."

"Katherine Bright has been working at it with every energy she possesses. And when a girl is in such dead earnest, gives up all pleasures, it must be a great disappointment. I hope she gets the prize."

"I've felt better since yesterday, when Professor Blake spoke of you."

"Oh! has he been disappointed?" and Helen's heart beat almost audibly.

"Miss Van Meter was speaking of you, and he said, 'I think Miss Grant has acted wisely in keeping up to a high standard and not striving for anything beyond. She has made an excellent record this year.' So I suppose you think that praise enough."

"I am satisfied with it," and a glow of pleasure stole over her face, irradiating it.

She was happy, too, when Miss Bright was declared winner of the prize.

But the juniors were defeated at basket-ball, and great was the rejoicing thereat. Still, they won at the tennis tournament, and in



several of the field-day sports. Helen was followed by a very close second this year, but she triumphed amid the plaudits of the class and the spectators.

She grew quite nervous over commencement. Willard would come, of course. A letter from Miss Craven announced her defection. She had been called suddenly to Aldred House by the illness of Elma Gartney, and just at this crisis it was much better to bring her home at once. The fever had taken a turn for the worse, and it would be quite impossible to leave her. The house was large, she had secured an excellent nurse, and this would not interfere with Helen's visit.

"It has been so long since I have seen you, and your letters have been so brief," she wrote, "that I feel we have a long arrears to make up. I am so thankful the sorrow and the break have not interfered with your advancement."

Then Helen felt she had to face the issue alone. Willard would come and he would make a point of his devotion. She would not admit to herself that she was engaged — a



dozen things might happen the next year — but she was perilously near it. She hated to have the girls suspect and make mysterious signals to each other. She ought to tell Miss Brooks, since their relations had been so confidential, and yet, what was there for a real confidence? The girls who had lovers were so proud and happy, and she was neither, though Willard was a young man to be proud of. He was making himself very useful to his firm; he was Mr. Loring's right-hand man, now that the senior was having considerable trouble with his eyes. He might some day be offered the junior partnership; that was what he was working for, and they all loved her.

Oh, how could she have drifted into this entanglement with herself! Was she unreasonable, was her nature cold and self-centred? Ah, she had always loved her friends dearly, warmly. Now she could take Willard to her heart as a brother, confide in him, go to him frankly in any emergency. Perhaps she was formed only for friendship. In a discussion that she could recall, there was pointed out a one-sided view of college life; the abnormal



devotion of women to their own sex that resulted in a kind of confused attitude as to fine differences between love and friendship. Was a woman of many friendships capable of one strong, ardent affection for a person of the opposite sex, such as must constitute a well-ordered marriage? The arguments had run high and been really forcible. Miss Brooks never talked of lovers; Lorraine was too young. Oh, there was Grace Trevor! Love illumined her days, her work, her life. She was only an every-day girl; so much education might interfere.

Helen leaned down her head and cried.



## CHAPTER X

### UNKNOWN QUANTITIES

EVERYTHING was extravagantly gay. Girls in light, airy gowns flitted hither and thither with radiant faces and hearts like thistledown. They had been successful, and were to be moved up to serener heights. Miss Bessie Cochran had squeezed through and was wildly elated. She had been promised a ten-weeks' trip to Europe, and one would have thought she had stepped into the senior row.

Betty Garnier admitted the "squeeze."

"There's been so much fun," she confessed in her eager, riotous manner. "I wouldn't have missed college for anything. I just worship the gym and all the out-of-door sports. I'm not afraid of being mannish, and one needn't grow coarse. I mean to devote myself more to intellectual pursuits next year, and all the deeper joys of math. and lab. and



trig., and isn't there theory of equation and complex variables and sociology and psychology — why there is enough to keep me here ten years at least," and her joyous laugh was infectious.

Some who had not passed took it harder. There were grave faces and heavy hearts, while a few were loud in condemnation of different systems and favoritism.

As a general thing they soon grew hilarious, went about singing class songs, whistled, ran races for fun, practised the college yell until the woods echoed it round. They buried some records, burned others, chanted mournful dirges. Examinations were at an end and there was a week given over to pleasure. Friends and relatives began to pour in, and girls ran about to find lodgings for them.

The seniors were a little graver; there were many partings for them. A few were to remain for some advanced courses. There were plans and discussions; here were welcomes to those who were to take their places; there was the grand out-of-doors concert, the last play these seniors would give, and then the



days, the addresses, the sermon, the grand crown of all, commencement.

Helen fingered her letter with a heavy heart, upbraiding herself the while. She could not lay it by, but she knew what must be in it. She cut the end open and slipped the note out. It was written on business paper; Willard had never used it before and it roused a kind of resentment. As she cast her eyes over it her sober face changed to one of more satisfaction.

"I am a mean, ungrateful girl!" she said to herself, and for an instant she felt as if she could join a group of flagellants, so disgusted was she with the feeling of relief.

Willard would not come, and he was deeply disappointed. An hour before, word had reached the firm that Mr. Loring was needed urgently in St. Louis on a great railroad case. They were to take the evening train, and he had only time for this brief note.

"It isn't quite as if *you* were graduating; then I should throw up everything and come. I shall look out for that beforehand, and I shall look to find you in the dear old home



where I first saw the little girl who captured all our hearts."

Yes, it *was* a reprieve. No questions to answer, no explanations to make, no protests against a hasty decision. Yet, she tried to keep the lightness out of her heart, but it rose up like a bird suddenly set free. She took up her moral philosophy to steady it. She tried to see Willard speeding through the night and darkness farther and farther away, hurt and sore because he was deprived of the pleasure he had been counting on. Then she rose and went down-stairs and joined the girls in their merriment. They had respected her sorrow for the loss of her dear school friend, and she could not confess that it was not all sorrow. Still, she disliked make-believes, the shuffling along on what seemed the very outside rim of truth.

"You've had good news, haven't you?" cried Lorraine, slipping her arm over Helen's shoulder. "Who is coming? You look as if a great anxiety had been lifted."

Did she show things so plainly?

"There, you needn't gloom over so quickly.



I know something has been troubling you, and if a friend can't help she has no right to add curiosity to the burden. Don't you suppose I know there are things girls can't tell each other because they belong to a third person's confidence? They never trouble me."

"You are a sweet and dear friend. Yes, I have had a cause for anxiety, but it is over for the present."

"Then come down and help decorate for the concert. Oh, I forget—you are in the singing!"

"Only in the choruses. There were two fine contralto soloists, and I had too much other work to do."

The seats had been arranged in tiers for the audience, the posts had been decorated with flags and college colors, the background of the stage was a mass of greenery and branches of bloom. Girls were putting in effective flowers, rich-tinted peonies, pendant pink acacias, and yellow laburnum. Helen joined eagerly, then she was called to the last practice.

Just at dusk they hung the colored lanterns,



reserving the white for the edge of the stage. It was a veritable fairy-land. Spectators gathered early and rambled around full of praise for the admirable effects.

Then the singers stole in behind the greenery as noiselessly as if they had been fairies dropping into seats, their soft, white gowns flowing around them like waves. The conductor, with her baton, arose. The audience studied programmes. There were some grand choruses, a Latin hymn from "Stabat Mater," a soft Sicilian melody, duets and trios, with violin and harp accompaniment, and two beautiful songs, compositions of the seniors, one entitled "At Dusk," the refrain of which was full of exquisite melody. There were to be no encores, but at the last some special requests were heeded, and the "Good Night," sung over again.

"It certainly is the finest concert we have had yet!" declared Miss Van Meter. "There never has been such an excellent musical body as this year's seniors, and I tremble for a decadence next year."

"We must endeavor to keep them up to the



mark. I hope we shall hear a good account of our best singers. Miss Van Blascom has a fine offer to go abroad as an understudy to quite a noted singer, who is to train her. That 'At Dusk' was an exquisite little thing. Miss Hays can write beautiful music. She always 'weds it to the words,' as some one says."

The gay throng promenaded round. The moon had just come up. One and another carried off Helen to see a mother or sister or even a father; she was so bright and vivacious, so ready to answer questions and explain.

Then she espied solitary Shirley. She need not have been alone, but she was hovering about waiting the chance of seeing Helen.

"I wonder if it is wrong and envious to desire some of these people for your very own? The girls seem so proud and happy with their parents and friends. I don't suppose you ever longed for any one's father?" glancing up with lustrous eyes, the red lips quivering, the hands clasped.

"Why, that's odd," and Helen drew a long breath. "Yes, the father of my friend who



died was an ideal parent. Well — the mother also.”

“You loved your father very much, I suppose,” musingly.

“We were together such a very little, and his life had been spent mostly among men students. He did not understand girls at all.”

“I’ve been watching that tall man with a long white beard. How proud he is of that slim girl beside him, and how she loves him. Fathers are not all alike,” and Shirley sighed.

“That’s Edna Bradford. She will be in next year’s juniors. She has no mother, I believe.”

“Are many of your friends here?”

“Not one of any standing, outside of college, I believe. Most of my friends and all my relatives live at such a distance they could not come if they wanted to. And they are not college people.”

“Then we are alike, though you have so many friends it is not lonesome for you. I do so like some one with whom to enjoy things. But I know I couldn’t give much. Oh, you have been very kind to me! And



listening to the music, the songs, a thought came into my mind — a song it was, and it sung itself in my brain. If I could write music — ” in a wistful tone.

“ Take it up next year. Why do you want Greek? ”

“ Oh, there are so many splendid things in it! And I guess my father would be better satisfied. But music stirs me so, and that ‘ Good Night ’ —

“ ‘ Good night to all sweet tender things  
That haunt the underworld, ’ ”

she chanted in a soft, untrained voice. “ I want to write a beautiful song and set it to exquisite music. Then I shall dedicate it to you.”

“ Oh, thank you! I shall look for it next year. Now I know you will surely come back, and I hope we shall have nice times. It will seem a good deal better to you.”

Shirley glanced up with smiling eyes. She was a sweet-natured child, and it seemed as if she had gone astray among such a host of girls.



"I shall count on it all the vacation."

Was there not a duty here? Was not happiness a charm to be diffused about, rather than gathered in little circles? She slipped Shirley's arm through hers and began leading her about, introducing her to several. Miss Van Blascom passed.

"Here is an ardent admirer!" exclaimed Helen, "who deeply and entirely appreciated the setting you gave that beautiful song," and she introduced Shirley, who glanced up with shy hesitation that made her more charming.

"Miss Chardavoyne — let me see —" and the tall girl knit her brow in thought. "Wasn't there — oh! I have it, a poem in February's *Miscellany*. It was brimming over with music. Why, you could write songs. It is a fine gift to be able to get the lilt, the swing, the tenderness, the melody that can be wedded to notes. Some day, I may be singing one of your songs."

"Then I must write one just for you," Shirley returned simply with charming candor.

Then Lorraine found them. Her eyes were shining with delight.



"Father is coming for commencement," and there was a joyous ring in her tone. "The letter was in the last mail. I'm just wild with delight. I want him to see you. Well, little one, have you had a good time?"

"The concert was just lovely, and the girls were all so beautiful. I could have looked and listened all night."

"There is worship for you and adoration in the face!" declared Lorraine. "Did you like the violins? I thought them fascinating. And here are some of the performers."

The girls were in a gay humor. Shirley was simply enchanted.

"I ought to have tried a little of this before," Helen thought, rather conscience-smitten.

There was no ten o'clock to summon them in. They were not students now, but simply a throng of merry girls who were tempted to make a night of it. But there was to-morrow to be thought of.

The juniors were summoned to one of the recitation-rooms in the morning. This ceremony was kept a secret from year to year.



The platform was filled with seniors in trailing black gowns, and caps, and a great severity of manner. An usher seated the new girls, who glanced about rather wildly. Were these stern professors?

The tallest one stepped to the front and requested that through the address there should be no shuffling of feet, clapping of hands, whistling, cracking of peanuts, whispering, or anything that might divert the close attention of the speaker from her duties, which consisted of an address and advice to the young and unsophisticated juniors who had suddenly been tossed into the wide and dangerous field of seniordom, a wilderness of ideas struggling toward the light of maturity, with a feeble tallow dip in the lantern lighting them over bogs and quagmires, with will-o'-wisps of every description leading them astray, with false prophets crying, "Lo here" and "Lo there," with burial-places by the way haunted by ghosts of written quizzes, marked papers, exercises returned with politest of messages and excellent worldly-wise wisdom, such as falls naturally from the lips of experience, and



calculated to make the youthful dismayed and their elders serene in their conviction of superiority. And so she went on with a laughable conglomeraton of possibilities and facts, interspersed with quotations from Plato, from the satires of Horace, the comedies of Terence, and when there was a giggle the gavel descended forcibly upon the desk. Another girl rambled off in German philosophy, quoting Kant and Schopenhauer, and no end of learned names; a third took up Italian and Ariosto. Then there was a pause. What was coming next? There was an attentive hush, but mirthful eyes twinkled at each other.

The next was a most cordial welcome to the seats of the seniors, the rooms redolent with the flavor of teas and spreads, fudge and caramels, fun and wisdom, fixed opinions and compact prejudices, personally decorative labors, undeviating observance of the rules and customs of years' standing. Then the speaker's voice dropped to a more serious and heartfelt key. There was something nobler, sweeter, finer than the mere self-aggrandizement of study. There were many splendid



truths in the world, but nothing diffused more happiness or raised a higher standard in one's own soul, than love and charity, helpfulness to one's neighbor, the grand golden rule of loving as one would be loved, of giving as one would be glad to receive.

Then the seniors stepped down and there was a general clasping of hands, the light easy chaff, the good wishes, and the tumult of every variety of feeling that might have brought the tears so near the surface if they had not marshalled laughter instead.

Miss Brooks gathered Helen under her arm.

"I have positively decided to stay," she began, her eyes aglow with a new radiance. "It will be the first year of complete enjoyment, and I am afraid something will happen. Is it wicked, I wonder, to let one's self loose with a delicious sense of freedom? There was the burden of the three years, the shock that shadowed this, but we are to cast our burdens on the promise of the great Bearer, and why should we not leave them with Him? And here is my plan. There is a corner room with



four windows in the Seniors' Hall, that has a magnificent outlook. There is an extra charge, for it is admirably fitted up for two, a roomy closet for each. I want you. I wonder if you feel —" she hesitated and flushed. "Well, why shouldn't one be frank and honest? The question is whether you can afford a little added expense. Perhaps I had better save my money, but years of labor stretch out before me and I would like to have this smiling oasis to look back at when the waves of this troublesome world rise high. Don't answer me just now. If you are not in a hurry to get away, we will inspect it as soon as it is emptied. Miss Cushing is packed up and goes just after the seniors' banquet to catch a steamer."

"What a delightful prospect!" cried Helen, squeezing rapturously the hand she held.

"I know you are not rich, and I shouldn't want to persuade you into anything you could not afford, so you must be quite candid about it."

"I skipped the expenses of a year, you recollect, and that first year I was very prudent,"



laughing and coloring with a bright light in her eyes. "Grace Trevor was — well — had to be considerate, or she would have been in trouble."

"College living does create extravagant habits, unless one is very resolute. But it is the same with pleasures everywhere. Think of the delight of being rich enough not to balance your desires, not to be obliged to think if you take this you will have to give up that. Miss Cushing has her own income of a thousand a year, and a lovely home with her aunt, who has taken her on some splendid journey every summer; now it is a whole year abroad. And we poor girls who haven't rich aunts, nor fathers — well — we must get what happiness we can out of poverty. And now I must run off, I have a thousand things to do, — at least, ten. How we do exaggerate. Talk is not one of the exact sciences."

Helen found plenty to do, as well. Somehow, she seemed light of heart. There were the old pleasures that were so new and enchanting last year. They had not lost their charm, only the glamour of the first had faded



a little. There was the great dance on the green, the last reception of the seniors, the grand play, and last of all, commencement.

"If it only won't rain. We have had such peerless weather," sighed some one.

"In five years we have not had a rainy commencement. I don't know whether I have been a mascot or not —" and Miss Morse smiled.

It was a fine day and there was no break anywhere. The long procession of girls looked charming in their caps and gowns and the lovely chain of flowers. It was the largest graduating class the college had yet had. The exercises were crisp and sparkling, quite to the point, and not unduly prolonged. Then came the pleasure.

"Where is your friend of last year?" inquired Miss Mains of Helen. "And that charming young man! I quite lost my heart to him. Are they married? Wasn't she ages older than he was?"

"Oh! they were not lovers," Helen returned, a bit indignant, then smiled it away.





THE LONG PROCESSION OF GIRLS LOOKED CHARMING IN THEIR  
CAPS AND GOWNS AND THE LOVELY CHAIN OF FLOWERS.

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"Why didn't you ask him this year? Masculines are at a premium at such times."

"I believe he is in St. Louis," Helen answered indifferently.

"And no doubt some girl has snapped him up. He was so delightful!"

Was that the way he generally impressed people? Well, in a certain way she considered him delightful, also.

"Yesterday, cake; to-day, crumbs," sang out some one in the corridor the next morning.

"Yesterday, the fluffiest and airiest of gowns, to-day, sombre tailor-made suits; yesterday, laughter, to-day —"

"Sniffles," interrupted another. "Oh, girls! what's the use? We're coming back if the fates permit, so what's the use of tears and sighing when we're all jolly glad of the long vacation? Take care. Don't break your necks over the trunks and boxes."

Surely there was danger of a torn skirt or an unexpected bang as they scurried hither and thither. The janitor was helping with trunks, big boxes, suit-cases. One girl had



lost an umbrella, another gloves. Helen was amused at the disorder and confusion.

By noon, much of it had cleared away. The gymnasium was filled with silent, ghost-like figures, the reading-room was vacant, with the chairs pushed primly under the tables. A few were lingering around with rather sober faces, gathering up last relics of four happy years.

Leslie and Helen inspected the room and found it truly tempting. After some very frank consideration they decided to take it, and spent an hour or so removing their belongings. The porter carried the improvised bookcases and their contents. Everything would be swathed in wraps until September.

“But it is such a load off one’s mind,” said Leslie, with a sigh of content. “Helen, I liked you the day you entered. You were such an honest-looking, big girl, with no sort of pretence. And everything about you indicated a girl who had come to study. But not a few do come for the fun and to make acquaintances they think will advance them. They are to be the women and the mothers of the next



generation. I wonder if we are learning to live useful lives!"

Helen glanced up silently, and thought with a pang of the sweet and useful life that lay before her, the pleasure she could give to the two elderly souls that had been so tender to her, that longed to take her into their very lives.

"It's such a puzzle to know what is best — just right, I mean."

Leslie smiled. "You have not come to any very serious problems yet. So far, it is doing the best one can, giving out a little happiness here and there, helping those who are in need and necessity, not those who have friends and blessings on every side, but the poor in heart as well as in purse. I am glad college has turned out some splendid missionary women. We can all be near-by missionaries," and a sweet smile hovered over her face that made her really beautiful.

Helen wondered if she was not a little hypocritical. There was a great problem confronting her. Leslie Brooks had never had a lover, she had once said. Was she capable of judg-



ing then? If all the world loved a lover, would she not range herself on the lover's side?

She went back to her own deserted room. Lorraine was at home, the darling of her family. Helen had liked Mr. Denman a good deal. He was more of a business man and a man of the world than Mr. Bell, but he lacked some charm, that sort of poetical insight that had so won her. Willard, too, had very little of it; perhaps it was owing to a greater discrimination.

Ah, how lonely the room looked. Had she been so really content here? There would be more beauty next year, a lovelier living than one girl alone could make.

"Is this the trunk?" inquired the porter. "Suit-case, too," and putting one on the other, lifted them with his brawny arms. She picked up her umbrella and satchel and walked slowly down-stairs. The stage was waiting. Miss Van Meter and several of the last girls were in it. Leslie sat by her and her eyes expressed so much. Helen's train came in a few mo-



ments, and she said good-by with a choking voice.

It was dusk of the June day when she reached Kingsland. Miss Craven was there with the carriage.

“Oh, I am so glad to have you! It has been a whole year —”

“Oh, no! not ten months!” brightly, clasping both hands.

“But with Christmas counted out. I was afraid you might stand about the fever, but the worst is over, only she is so weak. She has been the sweetest little thing, however. I don’t know what I should do without those children, Helen. Life would seem devoid of interest. We need humanity, something outside of ourselves.”

Yes, her own life would be too small to hold her. She must outflow into others. A definite purpose was broadening and strengthening her nature in spite of the repression of her earlier years. And now that Helen had seen more of girls and women, she knew it had taken courage to resist Mrs. Davis’s plans, not



to drift, not to live uselessly, nor make wealth one of the gods of existence.

They had a dainty little supper together, and then they went out on the vine-covered porch. The moon was very late now, past midnight, but the stars were innumerable in the broad sky.

Yes, Helen had passed very successfully and was a senior. She had not tried for prizes, nor for any great honors. She was saving her energies for the incoming year. She would have a delightful roommate, a girl of her own standing in this world's goods, who was an orphan like herself, who had been weighted with a great sorrow and borne it with much courage, who was staying now for a postgraduate course and meant sometime to work for a higher degree. And there was the odd, fascinating, impulsive girl lover and poet, that in some way suggested Daisy Bell.

"Poor girl. What a pity her life was so short when there was so much in it. Oh, do you remember the flare-up we all had about my Christmas visit to you? I suppose she was charming; the girls adored her. But it



seemed to me she wasn't quite sincere, that she wanted more than she gave."

"We were never quite the same afterward, although she fancied she loved me very warmly. She was jealous, and I believe I can't tolerate jealousy very well. You love one friend for several gifts and graces, but she may lack a few that some other friend possesses in an eminent degree. You can't love a person for what he or she does not possess."

"I met Mr. Duer about a month ago. He seemed one of the agreeable men that nothing touches very deeply. I hope he made her brief life happy."

"It had all that money, variety, and handsome attire could give. I cannot imagine Daisy being happy in poverty, even if a wealth of love was laid at her feet. It is odd, and I am afraid not quite kind, to be able to see the faults of your friends so plainly, but what then becomes of discrimination, experience, the capability of judging more correctly, that training does give you?" and Helen's voice had a note of perplexity in it.



"You love your friends in spite of their faults. It is a good plan, I think, to look at the qualities you admire and that suit you, and let the others go. Why, Helen, I believe I learned that of you. You used to see the bright side of the girls at school, and you never were captious."

"There were so many bright sides," and now the voice had a soft ring in it that bordered on a laugh. "And I liked Daisy very much at first. She was what people call winsome. She had the power of appealing to you, of drawing you to her as if she needed you. It was very sweet. But one can't need so many, so *you* would be sort of dropped for awhile and she would flit to some other flower. But you must keep her place until she came back; you must not take in another."

"Yes. I know that."

"She wanted all. I wonder if I am volatile. I like so many people, women and girls. Still there are only a few that I like supremely, that I trust and accept without a question. I wish you knew Miss Brooks."

"Well, invite her here. You must ask any



friend. You accept so little, Helen," rather regretfully.

"I have accepted the home and the home feeling," Helen replied with a sweet solemnity. "And when I come to want and trouble I shall make a rush to you. Why, a dozen things may happen before I am sixty; you may some day have a helpless, nervous, queer old maid on your hands who has been smashed up in a railroad accident —"

"Oh, don't! don't! I'm glad to hear you say it, though. That is the real point of friendship to which I would like to attain. I shall never be jealous. I'd like half a dozen girls about, and I am almost impatient for these two little ones to grow up; yet childhood is so sweet."

"Don't you mean ever to marry?"

"I have taken no vow against it. I am learning a good many things about the world, about people. What an awful ignoramus I was! I can't see how you came to —"

"You interested me," interrupted Helen. "And then you had no near family ties; neither had I. Oh, there were many things!"



"Thank you for discovering them. But I do feel interested in your friends. I can imagine Miss Brooks, but that little poet who writes verses to you — I do really want to see her. If she was an orphan, now —"

"Oh, you will end by being a regular orphan asylum! And my ideal is a school like Aldred House."



## CHAPTER XI

### THROUGH PATHS SUNNY AND SHADY

FOR a few days Helen simply revelled in rest and delight. The letter from Willard was full of disappointment, but everything would be made up to him when he returned and found her in the dear old home. She wrote to Mrs. Bell, explaining the little delay, that her friend had a claim on her, that there was shopping and dressmaking. She felt conscience-smitten; it seemed as if she was not quite honest with anybody. A dozen times she resolved to talk the matter over with Juliet and then her courage failed her. She knew that she had been secretly hoping Willard's fancy would be attracted elsewhere, and she could be a daughter of the house in simple adoption. Was she ungrateful when so many joined to render her happy; give her of their best?



Elma improved, and was carried down-stairs a part of each day, and later taken out to drive. She looked very delicate and it brought back the old time of her accident. Helen thought more than once if the fates had been different, if Juliet had met Mr. Gartney as a marriageable man—but then, the children would not have been sent to school and they would never have met. She laughed at her own turn for romances, and the thought of marrying off her friends—“while I don’t even want lovers myself,” she said in a berating sort of fashion.

She let the days go on. She would not think; she walked and drove through beautiful ways; she swung in the hammock to the music of birds and the murmur of the fragrant air; she read verses aloud; she told over college episodes, and all the while one dear face haunted her, a tender, fatherly face, and she could hear the words of welcome, “In Daisy’s place.” She *must* make up to these elderly people what they had lost. Oh, she must! She could not be so cruel as to thrust aside this longing love.



"I must go early next week," she said to herself, standing on the wide porch in the morning sunshine, breathing in the fragrant air. "It is the thing to do, to accept. I suppose love will come. There is no one else, I have not even fancied what my hero would be like. And Willard has made a fine man of himself; any girl might be proud of him. I wonder what the hardness about me can be! Perhaps I am a little like father, but I must strive to conquer it. If I have been weak enough to drift into it, blind enough not to discriminate between love and friendship, I must pay the penalty. There will be a whole year —"

A messenger boy was running up the drive with a yellow envelope in his hand.

"Miss Helen Grant," he ejaculated breathlessly. She tore off the end.

"Father died suddenly Wednesday night. I reached home this morning. Come to us at once.

"WILLARD BELL."



Helen stood stunned. Just as she was thinking, resolving, for his dear sake! All the world about her seemed blurred, and a shiver sped through every nerve.

"Helen, what is it? You look like a ghost."

She held the telegram before Juliet.

"Oh, what a sad, dreadful thing! Yes, you must go. What can I do to help you? Had Mr. Bell been in ill health?"

"Not that I know of." Her voice was tremulous.

Then they glanced into each other's eyes. Was a secret half-suspected, half-confessed? Juliet kissed her tenderly, looked up trains, ordered the carriage, and was soon driving her down to the station.

Helen still seemed dazed, incredulous. How could it be! She had never dreamed of such an event, though she had felt anxious about Mrs. Bell. How would she bear this second stroke!

Willard came to meet her, grave, and yet so sweet that her heart smote her. Oh, any



other girl would love him, must love him! It was her duty now to try.

“Father hasn’t been quite up to the mark in some time, mother thinks. You see he missed her a great deal in the winter. They had never been separated for more than a week or two. And he was worried about Daisy. She had everything, to be sure” — he made a little halt — “but Duer wasn’t the kind of man she should have married. He was all for pleasure and excitement, and it wore her out. Father had not complained any, but he didn’t seem to care so much about the garden as he used. He would sit and read to mother; you know how fond he was of those simple little poems. When he came home that afternoon he lay on the lounge awhile, then he asked mother to go to drive. After supper he sat in his big easy chair by the window. A woman had been there doing some work, and she was pouring her wants and woes in mother’s ears. She went to look up some clothing for the poor body, and when she came in the room she thought father asleep, and would not disturb him. So it



was nearly nine when she spoke to him, and she couldn't believe at first. Some one hurried for the doctor, but she knew in a few moments that he was beyond earthly help. I hadn't expected to return quite so soon and must go back again. Both girls came up this morning; they were there when I reached home. I sent the message at once. Oh, Helen! I am so glad you came. You were so dear to him; Daisy hadn't a friend he cared so much about, and he was very fond of young girls. All our misfortunes seem to come at once. And now I tremble for mother."

Yet she found Mrs. Bell quite composed, though the greeting went to her heart and was another link in the chain binding her; she suddenly gave up the struggle and accepted the fate that seemed a duty. Marjorie gave her a sisterly welcome; she felt that it was taken for granted that she was to be one of the circle.

It was not altogether sorrowful. Indeed, while he was still in the house it seemed as if he must rise out of his sleep and join them.



There were so many sweet remembrances called to light, there was the sure abiding that he had changed his earthly home for a heavenly one.

After Daisy's interment they had decided to make a new resting-place at Woodlawn and had removed the one little child lost years before. The funeral services were to be at Vernon Park. So many of their old friends had gone away, and as it seemed most likely now that the home of years would be given up, for Marjorie had insisted that her mother should remain with her, Mr. Hollis had taken charge of the funeral, and the service was at his church.

They all went to the rectory afterward. Mrs. Bell took possession of Helen. She seemed to love to linger over the visits, the talks, the readings.

"There are some volumes of poems I want you to have, for I know you will value them," she said in her tender tone. "I can see this is going to change my life for me, although many times last winter I thought if I once came back, nothing would ever induce me to



give up my home. But I could not stand the loneliness without him. Then Willard's affiliations will be in the city, and it would be too much to ask him to take his father's place. We had our youth there, and times change. Willard must be free to settle where it is best when his time of home-making comes. He is to go west again for several weeks. I should like to keep you —" wistfully. "But it would be lonely and sorrowful, for we could not help going over the past and missing him. The hardest part of the loss is not at first. And your vacation ought to be cheerful and bright to help you through your next arduous year. Mr. Bell was so proud of your success. He counted on coming to see you graduate. And now it is your senior year. I shall want to hear from you often."

"And surely you shall," Helen returned with eager sympathy.

"You seem to have more of Daisy's girlhood life than her sisters, and you will always be dear to me, believe that."

"Oh, I do! And I recall the old times



when I was troubled and came to you for advice. There was no one so like a mother."

Mrs. Bell kissed her fondly. "I shall always want your love, my dear. And you must come to me in any trouble or perplexity. Sometimes, paths are confusing. Oh, never be afraid!"

"I could trust your love, your judgment, in every case," returned Helen, much moved.

Mrs. Towne came up for the day with her two children. Her husband's mother was quite an invalid now. The little girl was pretty and charming, the boy a hearty, robust little fellow, full of questions and laughter. They were a great pleasure to Mrs. Bell; Helen could see that.

"Come out and walk," Willard said the last morning. He was to leave at noon. "I've hardly had a moment with you. It was too bad about commencement. You see it is just here: Mr. Loring's sight is failing him and he hates to admit it, so he wants some one to depend upon that he can trust, confidentially. He has taken a fancy to me; he always admired father. It is a fine opening



for a young fellow," and there was a ring of pride in his voice.

"I am so glad — for your sake."

"And I hope it will be for your sake, as well. Oh, Helen, I do get impatient at times! It is not as if we could see each other often. I do not get any chance to plead my cause."

"But — we were to wait until — there is my year of study," in a little confusion.

"Oh, yes! And I can foresee that I shall be much engrossed. Only it seems as if you might give me some sort of promise to live upon."

A few days ago she was ready to promise any thing, all things. What was the matter with her? Why, when she actually faced this fact did she shrink from it? It was like signing something away that she did not know the value of, walking blindly in a path whose turnings she was unaccustomed to, and she experienced a touch of apprehension. Was it a struggle between the holiest and tenderest qualities of her soul and a question of duty?

"You see, if we were really engaged," he began, then hesitated. A vague feeling rose



in his mind that a girl ought to give of her best without argument if she really loved.

"It is best as it is," and her tone had a falter in it that did touch him. "I shall have a good deal of hard study this year, and you will be engrossed with business. The waiting will not harm either of us, and we shall be more certain —"

"I am certain enough now," rather impatiently. "Helen, you are a queer girl. You seem at times full of tenderness, then you are hard and cold. I wonder if you really understand all that love means?"

A sudden courage came to Helen. She straightened with a latent dignity and resolve.

"No, I do not," she made answer. "There are girls in college wearing engagement-rings, and they laugh and chatter about their lovers. There seems something sacred in it to me, that is, if it should go down deep in one's heart. Perhaps I am not ready for that highest of all love. Oh!" softening her tone though she did not raise her eyes, "let us be friends as we were, for this year —"

"Tell me, is there any one else?"



She gave a short laugh, half mirth, half indignation.

"Several of the young men you saw at commencement, and who had been there occasionally, were the other girls' lovers. You see — we girls are sufficient for ourselves mostly. And I like some of them so much."

"And there are the brothers. I suppose that young clergyman, your teacher's brother, came?"

"No, he did not. Mr. Morse you mean. They went up in Canada."

She would not resent that. It was puerile.

They went on in silence, then he suddenly looked at his watch.

"I shall have to go," he began, "and with a heavy heart. Poor father! It seems like a dream and as if when I came home again I should find him. He loved you so."

"And your mother is my dear, dear friend."

"At all events," in a more cheerful tone, "you will write. Are you going to spend your vacation with Miss Craven?"

"Part of it. I must go to Hope. They



think me very remiss. Oh, I wish I were at least half a dozen persons!"

"I want you all in one. I couldn't bear to have you divided up."

They both laughed a little at that. Willard and his mother had a very tender, sorrowful parting; it overshadowed the others.

Helen devoted herself to Mrs. Bell during the next few days. Mr. and Mrs. Hollis were most cordial; indeed, the young clergyman was warmly interested in her. Her intelligence had such a wide range without being pedantic. It was settled that Mrs. Bell would not go back to the old home at present, perhaps not at all. They would fain have kept the bright, gracious girl for a longer stay, but she felt she must return.

Juliet was much interested in all that pertained to the change.

"Mrs. Bell bears her sorrow with a great deal of fortitude," Helen said. "She seems very delicate now, and depends so much on Marjorie, who is a sweet and tender daughter, with one of those uplifting natures. She



makes a charming clergyman's wife. I can't understand why Daisy was so different."

"Helen, are you engaged to that young man?"

"No, I am not. Oh, Juliet, I want to tell you! I want a clear-eyed friend who is not moved by sympathy. I do not seem to know myself. I like Willard Bell so much, and he will make a fine man of himself. I hardly thought he had so much ambition. But — I can't analyze it satisfactorily, a college girl, too," and Helen gave a short laugh. "We are on different planes, if you can understand. They are neither higher nor lower. We could run along side by side for years, it seems to me; at least, I could," and an earnest light transfigured her face. "But when it comes nearer, when I think of crossing over —" and her face settled in perplexed lines, her eyes seemed to gaze into a troubled future.

"You are not in love with him," returned Juliet decisively.

"What *is* love?" Helen flung herself on the soft rug and leaned her arms on Juliet's lap. "I'd like to know."



"It is nothing that can be weighed or measured, nothing that can come at one's bidding, or be trained or shaped by any fancied duty. I thought last summer there would come a time, — why, I almost felt you would care for him in that way."

"And you approved?" glancing sharply in the other's eyes, eager for the verdict.

"I couldn't make up my mind. He seemed so young and boyish."

"And now he is a man. They all love me so. I had made up my mind — am I unstable as water? It seemed as if I owed them a daughter's duty after Daisy was gone, but this change has unsettled me. I have refused to be engaged at present. That is all there is of it. No, not all. I would rather not come up to the highest happiness myself than pain Mrs. Bell. It is curious, she never spoke of it, though they all take it for granted," and Helen flushed deeply. "Somewhere I have made a great mistake. I can feel it, but I cannot see just where. Am I a coquette?"

"No, no. I suppose this happens now and then to attractive girls who really are not



dreaming of such a thing," and her own color wavered a little. "It is tenderness and sympathy and a very dear friendship. I love Mrs. Howard like a daughter; I can understand that part of it. As for the rest, it is only waiting to see what time brings. If it brings love deep and fervent, you will know that and go gladly; if it is otherwise, I think you would be very unhappy in such a marriage. And so, dear, put it out of your mind for the present."

"It is my nature to want matters settled," protested Helen, "not hanging on tenterhooks, as Aunt Jane used to say. It makes me feel restless, impatient, as if there were two sides of me, one warring against the other. I want to fly back to college, to the old routine of work and talk and the simple pleasures, the intellectual stimulus, the progress, the open doors that lead into wide, beautiful living, the blitheness, for it is that, the discrimination and appreciation, and that curious differentiation of individual tastes. And I like girls. Oh, I could pick out half a dozen that would just adore Willard Bell!



I think he would like to be really worshipped, and I am afraid I am not a very worshipful girl. Only I don't want to have a broken heart laid to my charge."

She was beginning to recover her equanimity and felt quite light-hearted. She did so want to be open and fair and have no kind of pretence about the matter.

There were some delightful walks and drives, a few journeys by train to points of interest. Elma was content to be left with nurse and grandmamma, even if Wilma was taken. How thoroughly happy Juliet was with all her plans, her garden and flowers, and the few poor she had found around. She had made some very agreeable acquaintances. The Newells had sought her out, and they were glad of a mutual link in the pretty young wife who had gone. They came to call upon Helen and she found them charming, indeed. It was a real vacation with no tasks looming up before her.

"But I must go to Hope," she declared to Juliet. "I wish I could take you with me."

Juliet considered.



“ Well, if you did not stay too long,” smilingly. “ I *should* like to see your cousin, and that sweet Mrs. Wilmarth. Oh, do you hear anything about the Danforths? ”

“ Why — no,” Helen said in half-surprise.

“ When I went for the children they were about moving. Mr. Danforth had a very nice call somewhere in Brooklyn, and the next oldest boy had a fine opportunity to teach in a school and have an education in the higher branches to fit him for college. How nice that young fellow was! He is still in the West.”

Helen recalled the summer at the beach, and was glad to hear about them. And she wondered in a vague manner what had become of Mr. Warfield.

The Hope people had not changed much, but they seemed to Helen almost queer with their primitive ways. Mrs. Dayton was quite an old lady; not so old in years, either. Her sister and a niece lived with her, and she had but the one boarder now. She insisted on the girls accepting her hospitality and was delighted to see them.

“ You don’t seem to change a bit, Helen,”



she said. "The cheerful, merry look hasn't been extinguished by college training, and you've just the same inspiring sort of voice. Oh, do you remember how you waited on that Mrs. Van Dorn and read to her and never was a bit impatient with her whimsies! She had a good heart. And your father! O dear! how afraid we were that you would have to go to London. I suppose you will some day. Dear! dear! how many things have happened to you. Have you heard about Mr. Warfield? He is married. He sent me a paper with a marked notice, and there was quite a little send-off in ours. We are proud of our paper, I can tell you."

Helen smiled, and hoped he would be very happy.

The Wilmarths were glad to see both girls. Mrs. Wilmarth had made considerable improvement in strength, and with her appreciative companion was doing quite a bit of intellectual uplifting among some of the younger people. She wanted to hear about Helen's college experiences, and also what she meant to do.



"There is so much work in the world," returned Helen, "and as I have no especial genius, I suppose I shall teach. It has been a plan of mine always. We have some splendid women professors on our college staff."

Yes, she was the same bright, eager girl, with a charm better than mere prettiness.

"And now we must go and call on Mr. Walters," Helen said to her friend. "I do really want to see him. And you must not mind if he talks a good deal about his book; though it has been praised enough to make him vain."

He was out on the porch in his old, high-backed chair, while in the big splint rocker sat a much younger man, who, when the first greeting was over, held out his hand, which brought a color to Helen's cheek. "We have been talking of you, Miss Grant, and this is a very delightful surprise. I was not able to be at your commencement this summer, so I missed the pleasure of seeing you. This more than makes amends."

Helen flushed brightly, remembering Willard's rather jealous reference to Mr. Morse.



"Why, I thought you were in Canada!" returned Helen in surprise.

"We started, my sister and I, but at Montreal we met a Boston cousin who is blessed with an abundance of this world's goods, and she insisted upon whisking Margaret off to London. She would not include your humble servant, so I had to provide diversion for myself, and this visit has been in my mind for some time. I am most glad to meet you again."

Juliet was introduced, and Mr. Walters went in search of his wife.

"I've been hearing so much about you, Miss Grant, and your father. Why your life has been quite a romance. And Hope doesn't seem a romantic place, either, for all its beautiful name; though I have been enjoying the quiet and restfulness. My charge is in a small manufacturing town, and we have a good deal of noise and bustle, and not many green fields, I must confess."

Mrs. Walters came to welcome the girls. They must take off their hats and stay to supper; it was such a treat to have them.



And how odd that Mr. Morse should have come yesterday!

"And we came last night. Oh, really, we ought not to stay! Mrs. Wilmarth will expect us back."

But the persuasion was too strong to resist; there was so much to talk about. They all felt very proud about Helen winning the prize, and stepping over the heads of her classmates.

"And now you are a senior!" declared the host, his face alight with admiration. "You are a girl to be proud of, and we are glad you belong to Hope."

"You must wait until I get through before your pride reaches the highest point. Now, if I had to spend two years in the senior class —" and she smiled archly.

"That would only make your four years. Oh, you needn't attempt to quench our belief in your success! Are there honor girls? You see, I do not know much about a woman's college," and Mr. Walters gave his cheery laugh.

"There are honor girls and degrees," an-



nounced Mr. Morse. "And they turn out some fine students."

"Miss Grant had it all in her," and Mr. Walters nodded his head admiringly.

Helen's cheeks were rosy red, and to change the talk, she asked how the book was progressing and if he had begun another.

"It is still selling, so the stores haven't thrown it over yet," he laughed. "But I am afraid my inspiration has departed, unless you take up your abode in Hope again."

Mrs. Walters had been making friends with Miss Craven, and now the summons came to supper. Mr. Morse made himself very entertaining, and shielded Helen gracefully from the profuse admiration of the kindly old man. Afterward they had some singing and Mr. Morse walked back with them. Finding the Wilmarths on their porch, he paused for a little chat.

"What are you going to do to-morrow?" he asked. "Couldn't we arrange to take some walks together? Miss Grant, you can't have forgotten the nooks and haunts of your childhood. And I want to visit the old



churchyard. Your father was certainly a great student."

"We are going over to my uncle's to-morrow," Helen said quietly, with no hint of invitation in her tone.

"Is that where the young man has begun his greenhouses? Our dear old friend was talking of his ambitions. I always feel interest in the man or the woman who sets about improving his or her own town. It seems such a pity that the country lads should rush off to cities, to the temptations, the poor fare oftentimes, and the vitiated air, for a pittance that gives them a bare support. I see so many pitiful wrecks. Yet I think country life ought to be made more attractive. Your friend was saying that they talk of consolidating the small places into a regular town with some sort of progressive government."

"I had not heard of that," returned Helen. "Well, this place is the most progressive. It's funny, the Hopes are the points of the compass and this is the centre."

Mr. Wilmarth thought it was time they did



something. There would be an election held in the late autumn.

"Do you walk or ride out to your uncle's place?" Mr. Morse asked with interest.

"We are going to walk. It's two miles or so."

Helen's tone was rather indifferent.

"Well — can I be included?" in a somewhat coaxing tone. "I am fond of walking."

"Oh, if you like! It is country to the very backbone. There are no mountains or dancing streams or grand old woods. The most picturesque thing is the dilapidated fences."

"I'll call for you," nothing daunted. "At what time?"

"We shall get off early. Country habits, you see," and there was a suggestive smile. "Well — perhaps half-past eight, while it is cooler."

"I will be on hand. I've had a very pleasant evening, and enjoyed meeting you again. Good night," bowing himself away.

Helen stood quite still, looking after him.

"It's bad luck to watch a person out of sight and I hope it will be his — toothache, or



something not an accident. I don't want him to go."

"Helen!" in surprise.

"Well, I don't, that's the truth. They are plain old country people, and Aunt Jane flings about mismatched sentences, and now Aurelia has come home, there will be no end of scolding. Oh, that's awfully snobbish, isn't it! I ought to be ashamed. Uncle Jason is as good as gold, and no one in the world loves me better."

Her face flushed and her eyes were dewy with a suggestion of tears. Juliet's expression rose above sympathy to a higher significance.

"And —" Helen's cheeks were scarlet now, "he can — did — did I flirt? Mr. Walters always *will* praise and adore me, and I tried to have Mr. Morse preserve a sort of balance. The idea of his wanting to go with us! If you find me unamiable to-morrow, you will know it is because I don't want to lead an unsuspecting man astray."

"He doesn't look as if he would be easily



led astray. There is a good deal of resolution in his face."

"His sister is a splendid woman. We have some very fine teachers."

"Well, truants!" exclaimed the merry voice of Mr. Wilmarth. "I was just thinking of coming after you."

They had a little music and then dispersed for the night.

They found Mr. Morse was very prompt the next morning. The sun seemed playing hide and seek among the clouds, making a shifting light that brought out and then shadowed the trees; that spread a golden sheet over the grass, then appeared to roll it up in grayish green or make long windrows. Here the meadows had been mown, and the stubble looked angry at being shorn. There a herd of cattle wandered at will, tempted by a bit of herbage farther on, or the coolness of the little creek that was half-hidden by a row of weeds. It was a pretty picture, in spite of shabby houses and broken fences.

Mr. Morse was enjoying it very much. Not a squirrel missed his eye, and the wood-



pecker, running up and down, trying every break in the bark, suggested something from Thoreau. Helen was unusually silent, so Juliet felt it incumbent on her to make amends. How many bits of learning Juliet had stored away in her brain, and how well she talked!

"Now this has a tidy look," suggested Mr. Morse.

"Hello!" cried a friendly voice. "Why, Helen!" and Uncle Jason vaulted over the fence, taking her in his arms and kissing her warmly.

He was in his shirt-sleeves, soiled at that, and had on faded overalls that had dark blue patches at the knees. His hat-brim was ragged, his beard frowzy, and his hair needed cutting, but his eyes were tender, and the glow of delight illumined his face.

"This is my uncle, Mr. Mulford, the best uncle a girl ever had," announced Helen. "And this is the Reverend Mr. Morse, a connection of Mr. Walters," and she stood up straight and proud.



## CHAPTER XII

### DIFFERENT ADJUSTMENTS

THE old dooryard was abloom with choice flowers, fine roses among them. There were two rustic seats on the porch. The house had been painted and had taken on a new air of prosperity.

“Just set down,” said Uncle Jason cordially. “Mother, she’ll be all struck of a heap! I’ll go and open the front door and find Nat. He’ll be powerful glad to see both you girls.”

“Can’t we sit out here?” begged Mr. Morse. “What a fine pear-tree that is — and you’ve a nice apple orchard.”

“Nat’s been putting out some new trees and takin’ care of the old; mother, she laughs at book-learnin’, but I tell you, Nat’s makin’ it pay. He made a good bit of money on his young plants in the spring, and he’s sendin’



in strawberries now that just beat everything. And vi'lets! Oh, you ought to 'a' seen 'em, Helen, an' sweet as a rose, only they don't smell like roses! And he's so proud of them books of yourn, Miss Craven, that he hardly lets any one touch 'em."

Miss Craven flushed with pleasure.

"This is the first home that I remember," said Helen. "And I went to school almost a mile over on that road," indicating it with her finger. "And do you see that gnarled old apple-tree? That was my confidant. Oh, what woes and what dreams were confided to its scraggy bark! Nat has promised that it shall not be cut down, but die a natural death."

How pretty and proud and eager she looked! Was it love for the old place that had transfigured her? She had been very grave all the morning.

Uncle Jason blew the horn for Nat. Aunt Jane, as usual, put a whole troop of lions in the forefront, and wished the folks had waited until to-morrow. They would stay to dinner, of course, and she had meant to have a sort



of pick-up dinner. Then Aurelia was exhorted to bestir herself and not go droning round as if the world had stopped.

Poor Aurelia's marriage had not been a success. After three months of novel-reading and doing nothing, she began to miss the activities of her old home, the girls she had associated with, her sister Jenny, and to long for the home folks. She was on a large farm, some half a dozen miles away, with two rather penurious elderly people, and the fare was of the plainest order. Her husband's wages only a little more than paid her board, and there was nothing for the luxuries she had counted on. She grew very weary and homesick. Then they made a change which was not much better, and the wife of the hired man was rather snubbed by the neighbors. She fell really ill, and her father went and brought her home.

"I don't see why I can't be divorced," she had said to her mother when she was recovering. "I'm tired of being married. I'd rather stay home."

Aunt Jane was shocked and read her quite



a sermon, but she obstinately refused to go back.

"Nat wants a man," Uncle Jason said. "Silas might come to him, and we can't turn 'Reely out-of-doors, poor foolish creetur."

Silas was not so bad with a good master; indeed, he improved more than his romantic wife, and Nat found him very useful. He was grateful for a good home and interested in his work, now that it was made advantageous. Aurelia had slipped back into her old place and did seem to gain a little common sense.

Uncle Jason opened the hall door and invited them within, but just then Nat came. He was a fine, spirited-looking young fellow, and held his head up with a certain air of pride. He was very glad to see Helen and Miss Craven. Uncle Jason came out again with a pitcher of root beer and a plate of beautifully browned cookies, and said his wife must be excused for a little while. After that, Nat carried them off to inspect his greenhouse and hennery, his long rows of flowers for seed, his young shoots of various kinds. Helen ran around to the kitchen to visit with



Aunt Jane. Her family pride had received a rather severe blow in Aurelia, but Jenny and her husband were laying by money, Sam was doing well, and Fanny was the best scholar in school and next year would try for the high school, though they didn't think it necessary for her to go to college in order to teach children how to spell cat.

In her secret heart Aunt Jane was truly proud of Helen, though she took a good deal of credit to herself for having trained her in the right way. Mr. Morse and Miss Craven rambled about so long that Helen felt that they would have to stay to dinner; she had meant to, herself. She helped Aurelia with the table.

"How pretty you do make things look!" Aurelia said admiringly. "I suppose you girls at college have everything very fine. And lots of fun! Oh, Helen, don't get married unless you can find a rich man who will give you everything! It isn't any fun to be real poor. I can't think what made me marry Silas; only mother scolded so. But she was awfully good when I was sick, and it's better



here. We always did have nice things to eat."

The young clergyman demurred a little at remaining to dinner, but cordial hospitality overruled all objections, and Nat proposed to harness up and take them to drive in the afternoon. The authorities had petitioned for a trolley road and part of the route had already been donated.

Uncle Jason did change his attire, to Helen's great delight. She brushed out his beard and trimmed off the ragged ends.

"Mother'll cut my hair as soon as she gets time," he said. "She does keep so busy, though I think 'Reely's gettin' a little common sense knocked into her. Poor 'Reely! Queer how different children can be. Jenny's her mother right over again, only she doesn't take things so hard, and her children are just fine."

It was quite a successful dinner and Mr. Morse seemed to take an interest in country living as being preferable to the struggles in cities and towns. Nat talked very intelligently, and Helen felt proud of him.



They sat out on the shady porch awhile until the midday sun began to pass the zenith and lengthen the shadows. The surrey had a top to protect them.

"If you don't mind," exclaimed Nat, "I'd like Miss Craven to sit on the front seat with me. I want to talk to her."

"Oh, no!" replied Mr. Morse.

Helen flushed, in spite of herself. Was there some curious fate throwing her in this man's way? She would not have thought of it but for Willard's remark. Oh, she *must* be careful! And at first she was so indifferent that she fairly despised herself. Was she to think that every little friendliness had a deeper meaning? That was too silly.

She roused herself and began to answer in something more than monosyllables. Mr. Morse made a few suggestions about her father, her past; Mr. Walters had interested him very much in her.

"And you met Miss Craven at school? She seems such a fine person, with both strength and gentleness. Is she all alone in the world?"



"So far as relatives are concerned. But she has a dear mother-friend, and she has taken two little girls. I wonder if it would be tiresome to listen to her story. Why, it is quite a romance."

"No; I shall like to," in an earnest tone.

Helen felt on safe ground now. She could be enthusiastic, for she did think it a truly generous thing to do.

"They are not really poor; there is enough for their education, perhaps more, but you see they did need love, protection, friends, and they have found one of the best. She is very fond of children, and I laugh at her and predict that some day she will turn her beautiful home into an orphan asylum."

"It is a noble work, this bringing love to mend the world. That is a poet's thought. Of course, you girls have many outlooks along those lines. It is a brave thing for you students with refinement and education to show how lives may be made better and cleaner by the college settlements — if the workers themselves are fitted for it. Oh!" and a faint smile crossed his face, "my sister once



had a strong desire to go out to some place in Turkey to the very benighted heathen, but I convinced her that she could be more useful here in training girls to make the best of their opportunities. So much in that line is needed."

"But you believe in missionary work?" said Helen, a little doubtfully.

"Devoutly. But I also believe one ought to plan his or her life so as to do the best work, the work that shall garner in the most fruit. You remember once the disciples toiled all night and caught nothing because they had not cast their nets in the right place."

"But how can one tell whether it is going to be the right place?" Helen asked in some perplexity.

"I think God points out the way, if one is not in too much haste. We are apt to snatch at a thing because we like it. I was going to make a fortune once so that I should have a good deal to give away, then I found it was better to give myself, and I have not repented."

Helen was silent, thinking. She *could* give herself away. Would it be best and right?



"Your friend did not go to college," he subjoined presently.

"No; she is essentially a home girl. I tried to persuade her and was disappointed; we were such true friends. But I am glad now. She has everything to make a beautiful home, and she makes it. I wish you could see it. And those charming children."

He drew out many things concerning her friend. Here she could be frank and free, her own natural generous self, without a fear that she was unfolding much of her own girlish mind and thoughts before him. She was free from personal vanity, yet he could understand in his own clear way of drawing conclusions that she had influenced her friend strongly along certain lines. The qualities had been lying dormant and needed the vivifying touch to kindle them, to draw them together, so as to make a fine and enduring flame.

Helen's simplicity charmed him this afternoon, but she had different moods. Last night and this morning, he did not like her nearly so well as now.



It was not a really beautiful country, but it seemed as if Nat's trained eye could select every suggestive nook, every fine tree, and he glanced back to call the attention of the others.

"Your cousin is unusually well informed for a country lad," Mr. Morse said. "How much one who has eyes to see and a mind to discriminate can pick up. I am glad to meet a farmer born, for he is that, and he will make a success of his life. And your uncle is so kindly and hearty, I am very glad you took pity on me and allowed me to accompany you."

"And I am glad you enjoyed it. I was a little afraid at first," she said unaffectedly. "Things that are nice in themselves sometimes get wrongly offered—I don't know that I make it quite clear," and she flushed ingenuously.

"Yes; I understand. I have done that thing myself by occasionally misreading a person. You see, we don't reach the acme of wisdom in our youth," he said with a reflective sort of smile, "and hardly in middle life,"



he added, after a few seconds. "I'm not sure but when we get to know it all we ought to die from very ripeness."

Helen laughed heartily at that.

"Are you tired?" asked Nat. "Don't you want to get out and walk around a bit? Down here in this sedgy spot is where I found some of my ferns that are supposed to thrive only in greenhouses. I imagine everything grows wild somewhere."

They had quite a delightful ramble, and Juliet discovered two or three plants she did not have in her collection. Nat promised to have them ready for her to take back.

"Now, if you don't mind, we'll change off!" Nat exclaimed in a vivacious tone. "I want my cousin a little while, to upbraid her for all her late neglect of me."

"You must blame that to the acquiring of much senior wisdom, and to farewell teas and talks and a play I had to take part in."

There was another grave matter that she could not explain.

No one made any demur. Helen was gratified to have an opportunity to talk over



family matters. She did pity poor Aurelia's sad mistake.

"Silas is a good, commonplace fellow, and a sharp, stirring wife, like mother, might make something out of him. That isn't any reflection on father, for though mother doesn't rate the Mulford virtues very highly, Jen and I, and I think Fanny, also, have father's kind of easy-going ways. We sort of finish up the day's work and go on to the next, and don't drag in yesterday and last week and bewail what couldn't have been accomplished, anyway. I make Silas real useful, but he is the sort of fellow who will never do anything for himself, make any advance, or strike out in ambitious ways. There are a good many such people in the world, I find, with a capacity for work that never seems to accomplish any real thing."

Yes, that was true enough.

"And now tell me about your affairs. Helen; you can't think how interested I am in girls who want to know something of the higher knowledge. So many are frivolous and just thinking of the present pleasures, as



if there were no years to come for which they must store up mental provision. You have written only such a little. What is Miss Morse like? Her brother is fine, isn't he? He is the sort of man that gives you an idea, and puts it in such shape that you must think about it. And the girls — of course you have met almost every variety, but there must be some fine ones among them. I don't suppose you ever felt hungry to hear about outside people? ”

“ I can understand the feeling, though. And Nat, I'll try to do better. There was the death of my friend, and then her father — ”

“ Was she as fine as Miss Craven? I think she is just splendid.”

“ She wasn't as fine and earnest to fill a place in the world, but she was very pretty and charming. And a curious little body has fallen in love with me at college, writes the daintiest verses to me; and she isn't a generally effusive girl, either.”

“ Oh, isn't that queer! And about the play? Why, it was almost like the theatre! I wish there was some place here a fellow



could go to now and then. I'm reading Shakespeare, but it seems as if you must be quite high up to understand it!"

She described the play and the scenery very graphically, and also some of the little comedies the girls had, just for their own amusement. She told him of the out-of-door sports, the ball and tennis meets, the grand tennis tournament which they always had before the senior class graduated.

"Well, you do have lots of good times. I don't wonder girls love to go to college. It stirs them all up, doesn't it? And won't you hate to leave it?"

"O dear, I don't want to think of that!" She was putting it out of her mind as much as she could, because there were some very serious questions concerned in it.

Then she told Nat about the two girls she liked best, and her gladness that Miss Brooks was to remain another year; the room they were to have, the library, the gymnasium, the beautiful plaza, and the chapel.

Almost before they knew it they had



reached Mrs. Wilmarth's. Mr. Morse thanked them for his delightful day.

"And what are you going to do to-morrow?" he asked.

"Visit and visit. And you must go to the library; Mr. Walters will be glad to take you. And the old church — oh, you can put in another day!" cried Helen archly. She was in an unusual flow of spirits. She was truly glad to have given her cousin so much gratification; the day had ended more happily than she had anticipated.

"I shall see you again to-morrow," Mr. Morse rejoined with his good-by.

"At least a quarter of the town has called to see you," announced Mrs. Wilmarth. "And there are to be visitors this evening. It is really the event of the season. Why, I am shining in borrowed plumage," said Mrs. Wilmarth with a genial interest.

Two ladies of the club came quite early. They had a very special errand and a favor to ask of Miss Grant. The club met Saturday afternoon at the house of one of its members whom Helen knew quite well, and the



request was that Miss Grant would come and give them a little talk on college life from the woman's side.

Helen was startled and abashed; her color came and went, and her nerves fluttered.

"I feel complimented," she began with some hesitation, "but —"

"Oh, Miss Grant, I thought you girls had to discuss problems at college and write papers, and it would be just a talk, you know, not over our heads in learned arguments! We want the young woman's side of it; we get the man's view in various magazine essays. I am sure you can tell us something interesting."

That she should come back to Hope to do this! The contrast of this and Mrs. Van Dorn's little waiting-maid appeared rather laughable to her.

"Why, yes, Helen," Mrs. Wilmarth began persuasively. "Of course you can. And it would be such a pleasure to us all. Why, if you only described the buildings, the routine, it would be interesting, and you might tell of



the political struggle and the procession you wrote to me about."

A curious bashfulness seized Helen in a grasp that rendered her almost breathless. What made her recall the old day at school when she had "spoken her piece," the dear old "Hervé Riel," with its "Sirs, believe me, there's a way"? She glanced up through the color that wavered into a positive charm, and the half-smile was cordially sweet.

"If it would give you pleasure —" hesitatingly.

"Oh, Miss Grant, it would be just lovely! We have to depend upon ourselves so much that it would be like a whiff of mountain exhilaration in our rather placid atmosphere. We can hardly thank you sufficiently. Then we may count upon you?"

"Yes," returned Helen. "Shall we call the subject 'The Unfettered Expansion of Individuality,' since I must talk about the manner in which college has affected me?"

"Why, that is capital. Reminiscences are always so interesting."

Then some others came in. There was talk



and music, and the girls were so tired and sleepy they could not exchange a single confidence. But Juliet said, "I was so glad you consented to speak to the ladies. It is a great thing to have some one from the outer world."

They spent most of the day with Mrs. Dayton, dropping into the library as they went back.

Mrs. Oakley was very glad to see them. The reading-room had been enlarged, and some new stacks of books put in an alcove. The Library Association had sent them a great number of volumes they had wished to dispose of, "but they were mostly all new to us, and we were glad to get them," remarked Mrs. Oakley. "And the publisher's catalogues are so beautiful. Why, we felt quite rich with the Christmas numbers. Oh, there was a gentleman in with Mr. Walters this morning who said he had met you, and we had quite a talk! I spoke of it to my husband at lunch, and he wondered if we couldn't get him to give us a lecture or a talk, and ask a quarter for the tickets, and devote the money to a few embellishments? I do like



pictures so much. Mr. Walters has sent us several, and Mrs. Wilmarth painted us two beautiful flower pieces."

Helen laughed with an outburst of gaiety that she could not resist. Mrs. Oakley looked surprised.

"Pardon me," Helen cried with a quick wave of remorse. "But I have promised to speak to the club on Saturday afternoon, and as we are both visitors in the place, I think he ought to be made to do something for his hospitable welcome in the town. Yes, it is an excellent scheme, and I am sure he will be a fine speaker. Can't you have it soon, and can we do anything to help?"

"How good you are! Yes, talk it up. And it must be announced in Saturday's paper. Why, I think it may be quite a success. We had two lectures last winter and cleared seventy-five dollars, and one concert by the Orpheus Club just for pleasure. I want you to meet Mr. Oakley again; he is so interested in the welfare of Hope."

They walked about, and Helen met several old friends. It seemed as though every one



invited them to tea. When they returned to their friendly mansion they found Mr. Morse.

"Do not say a word about my talk," Helen whispered.

Mr. Morse thought he must leave early in the next week.

"I do not want to wear my welcome threadbare," he declared laughingly. "But I find Mr. Walters quite a charming old gentleman, who is enjoying the evening of life in a delightful manner with his books, his friends, and his correspondence. I hope to tempt him into a visit to me, and I should like my sister to see him. If it is not impertinent, how long shall you stay in this secluded town?"

Helen sighed, then smiled. "I have only begun my visits," she confessed. "I must spend at least two days with my uncle. And there are calls and teas — I never thought to be a person of so much consequence."

Nat asked Mr. Morse to come over on Saturday morning and take a drive, as he had to go into the neighboring town to see the florist with whom he was doing some business.



So Mr. Morse did not see the announcement in the paper that Miss Helen Grant was to speak at the Ladies' Club on that afternoon, and that his own talk was settled for Tuesday evening of the following week.

It was not the first time Helen had spoken to an audience and run the gauntlet of critical, ironic, and sarcastic half-smiles, and eyes with fun and ridicule in them. Girls were not always kindly judges, even of their friends, and it was supposed raillery brought out the high lights of courage. She did wonder a little how these people who had known so much about her girlhood would look upon her now. Could she avoid pedantry on the one hand, and an appearance of vanity on the other?

Everybody, it seemed, had brought a guest; even Mrs. Dayton was there. After the opening exercises, the chairman introduced the girl so many of them knew and were proud of claiming as a townswoman. There were smiles of interest and appreciation on every face.

It was a simple talk: the beautiful sur-



roundings, the different rooms, the halls, the library, music-room, concerts and lectures that diversified severer studies, pleasures and society of different minds, frolics and fun, the gradual development and unfolding of character, the appreciation of the nobler capacities of truth, earnestness, and the lovable qualities that are capable of forming lasting friendships, the practical side fitting one for the real struggles of life, the teachers with their broader outlook, the settlement workers, the philanthropists, the religious associations that were carried out into the wider world to do their great work. Her voice was clear, her enthusiasm magnetic, her manner free from affectation.

She was warmly applauded. The older ones congratulated her, the younger ones, girls she had known, thronged around her in admiration.

"Why, we could have listened a good hour longer and lost our suppers," said one. "You are just splendid!"

"But it does cost so much to go to college," and another sighed.



"I'm glad there will be a different generation of girls presently," said a middle-aged woman. "Simply having a lover and getting married is not enough. Mothers need more wisdom to train their girls for something better than frivolity, gossip, and card playing. The right sort of an education isn't going to spoil a girl for real sensible living, and it may keep her from a hasty and foolish marriage. Thank you very much, Miss Grant, for speaking so highly of single women."

There were more invitations to tea, "enough to last a full month!" Helen declared merrily.

Then, on Sunday, most of Hope turned out to hear Mr. Morse preach. Helen was deeply interested. She could not help an honest, thorough liking for him; indeed, she flung her misgivings to the winds and did not try to help liking him. Juliet was equally pleased.

The preaching gave an impetus to the selling of tickets, and the assembly-room was really crowded. Mr. Morse was bright, witty, and entertaining; pathetic, too, in some parts.



“And now, having done my duty, I must leave this enchanting country,” he said to the girls the morning after his lecture, as he stood on Mrs. Wilmarth’s vine-covered porch, where the air was delicious with a blending of all odors. “I’ve had a grand, good time. I wish my sister had been with me. I shall never be able to tell her half, but I shall depend on you to tell her the rest. I’m planning a deep, dark design that in some vacation time she may come to keep house for me and bring you as her guests. I might even seek to persuade you, Miss Grant, to address a girls’ club, for I do not believe you would despise mill-workers. I feel as if I had been wronged by not being allowed to hear you.”

“But I paid my quarter to hear you,” returned Helen archly, her eyes shining with mirth.

“I hope you had a quarter’s worth of knowledge, or amusement. I should be sorry, as a clergyman, to defraud any one.”

“The Library Association are just delighted. I think no one was defrauded. In the name of our small town, I thank you, and



you must come again to see whether they have spent the money wisely."

"I shall be most happy to. I have had a truly pleasant and interesting time, and I have added your young cousin to my list of friends."

They shook hands cordially.

The Wilmarths were enthusiastic in the young man's praise, and good Mr. Walters declared it had been an oasis in his life, though he did not consider Hope a desert, by any means.

And then there were visits and tea-drinkings until Helen longed for a respite. "Hope is really dissipated," she said, laughingly. "We have turned it upside down."

"And how odd we should have met your Mr. Morse here —"

"He is not mine." Helen flushed with a secret indignation. "Why, I think he was quite as attentive to you! And he was so interested in your little girls and — and in Kingsland Manor. He almost begged an invitation to visit you, and you never gave it."

"Did it look so to you? I supposed —"



“Don’t suppose anything.” Then Helen laughed with her olden spontaneity. “We won’t quarrel about a man who has seen hundreds of attractive girls, and I dare say only thought of the pleasant time he was having. I am sure he enjoyed it. And you know I am half-engaged. It hangs over me like — like —”

“Then it is not the right thing. Oh, Helen, do not make any mistake! Remember it is for a lifetime.”

“My dear, let us not soar to the heights of tragedy. I have a premonition that I shall be an old maid, and come and bestow my queernesses upon you,” Helen replied, kissing her fondly.



## CHAPTER XIII

### OUT OF HER LOYALTY

THEY found everything in good order at home. Elma had improved rapidly, but had not regained all her olden strength. She liked to lie in the hammock and have Mrs. Howard read to her, while Wilma went dancing round and singing with the birds.

“We had a fine time, but I’m glad to be here again. I feel virtuous; as if I had accomplished a good deed and reaped a reward for it.”

“I certainly enjoyed it as well,” returned Juliet. “What a difference a few hundred miles make in people. I often wish there were some very poor here, or that I could bring out some settlement work. I send them down flowers and fruit, and we make clothes for the needy. I ought to have some of them



out here, yet I find many of them enjoy a day at Coney Island and the shows with a great deal more zest. One woman came up in June with a half-sick baby, but she thought it very lonely, and the noise of the insects was dreary to her at night, while in the city one was always having music and singing. She only stayed a week. The baby is dead now."

"It depends upon the point of view and what makes a person really happy."

"Mr. Morse thought Mrs. Wilmarth and her friend had taken the work up at the right end. And he liked Mrs. Oakley so much. She is very happy in her marriage, isn't she?"

"It seems so. She helps on the paper; she has a much wider range of mind. And she has found two girls who write passable verses. The college *Miscellany* would consign them to the waste-basket, but they really were very sweet. The wren, you know, has a dainty little song, and doesn't ape the nightingale."

"And the world is wide enough for both." Juliet raised her soft eyes with a tender light in them



“And now I must attack a pile of letters. Adieu, until luncheon,” and Helen sped upstairs to her room with its refined and attractive belongings. There was her first “Virgin” that had roused her sense of artistic beauty and divine motherhood, her photographs of Mrs. Van Dorn at her best, Daisy Bell in the plenitude of girlish grace, and several other girls, though most of them were consigned to an album.

Grace Trevor had written a bright and interesting account of herself. She and life were on excellent terms, and now Chris was beginning to have a lover who was agreeable all round. There was Mrs. Bell’s sweet, rather brief note. She was not very well, but Marjorie and Mr. Hollis were the dearest son and daughter a mother could have. There was a letter from Lorraine, who was up in the Adirondacks, walking, rowing, breathing the healthful air of firs and pines with their resinous fragrance; also one from Leslie, who was helping her brother get his house ready for his bride after their long engagement. They would be married and go off for a fortnight,



then settle themselves. She was to have a room in the house for her own.

"Perhaps I ought to teach, instead of having this year of pleasure, but somehow, I can't bear to go away from dear Alma Mater and leave you girls behind. Next year, in the general dispersion, I shall not feel so keen a pang. Helen, what is there about you that draws people? If I were rich I should adopt you and never let you go. It would be a threefold chain you could not break," she wrote.

Helen smiled, and then suddenly kissed the dear words. What if they should cast in their lots together like the two girls at Mrs. Aldred's? She wondered what had become of them. She and Leslie might have a school somewhere. And Juliet!

She wrote to Nat, and to Mrs. Wilmarth, and before she had come to the end, the luncheon-bell rang.

"We must go to drive this afternoon," Juliet said.

"I have two letters to write, then I shall be at your service."



But she sat quite a while over Willard's. The comfortable sense of comradeship had gone, and what she was trying to put in its place would not fit. They might walk side by side without friction, but his levels were not hers, his outlook was bounded by temporal successes; he could not enter into her thoughts, though he might listen attentively. Oh, was she a silly romantic girl? Was this what college was doing for her?

She clasped her hands at the back of her head and glanced out of the window with unseeing eyes. There were men in the world who had different aims, who were strong of thought, who were earnest in the advancement of their fellow creatures, who had a breadth that raised one to new endeavors, who had a richness that outflowed, who saw possibilities in common lives, helped others to gain them, whose thought was for those around them, not simply for the enjoyment of the one soul taken into it, absorbed by it.

She had not seen many men, after all — at least, no wide diversity of the opposite sex. What sort of prescience was this pervading





SHE GLANCED OUT OF THE WINDOW WITH UNSEEING EYES.  
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her, slowly but surely, a knowledge she had feared before with all her misgivings? A rich inward sight, it seemed, over which no veil could be drawn that would shut it away.

"Helen," called a soft voice. "Cousin Helen," in an eager child-tone, "are you ready for the drive?"

She sprang up. Had she been dreaming here for almost an hour? The silvery chimes rang out four o'clock. She hurried into a gown, thrust away the barely begun letter, and enjoyed the long delightful drive through shady, fragrant ways.

There were callers in the evening, so she resolutely set to work the next morning. There was the visit to Hope to write about, her uncle and cousins, the old friends at the Center, Mr. Walters, the library, and the talk before the club, over which she made merry, the lecture given for the benefit of the library, and what a great success it was.

There was no mention of Mr. Morse, however. It would only lead to surmise and questioning. Here was Mr. Lansing last evening, twice as gallant, who had been arranging a



drive to a pretty cascady spot and a picnic supper, who was attentive and complimentary, and abounded in the pretty nothings of society — why, she would not think of dragging him in. Still, there was a feeling of insincerity that she could not banish, a misgiving that it was not honorable. And why, since she was not really engaged?

She told Juliet about her friend Leslie, and how she would have two rather lonesome weeks while her brother was away. On the sister's account, they had given up intimacies with many of their friends.

"I wish you would ask her here," responded Juliet quickly. "There is quite a little society diversion just now. We shall be glad of a good tennis player, and Mr. Lansing has proposed private theatricals, just some simple amusing play."

"I should be delighted to. Oh, do you remember our play down at Balem? What fun it was!"

"And I've had some nice calls on Mrs. Osborne. The family is now abroad. Oh, how glad she would be to see you!"



“ I’ll put on my hat and run over,” laughed Helen. “ Where are they? London — Paris — Berlin? ”

“ She is a charming woman. What a summer that was! ”

The thought of Gordon Danforth came to Helen’s mind. Where was he, and what was he like now?

Helen sent a very warm and cordial invitation. Leslie telegraphed, and came very soon.

“ You see,” she said, as she was laying aside her wraps in the handsome guest-chamber, “ that although you may love one and desire his happiness, nothing can ever be quite the same again. It ought not to be,” and the light, coming and going in her eyes, had the lucent softness of tears. “ It would be a poor love that set any other above a wife, and I can truly rejoice in this marriage. But I didn’t want to go off pleasuring among strangers. And — don’t convict me of curiosity when I say I did want to see your friend’s house.”

“ I am glad of that,” in an eager voice.

“ It is beautiful! Helen, you are a girl in a hundred, a thousand, perhaps, that you



don't envy her, and keep up a continual pæan of delight, of boasting, since it would all be true. She doesn't act as though she lived in a palace. You are a fortunate girl."

"I am proud of her love," Helen returned. "It would look silly to protest that I should love her the same without a penny, but I should."

"No one would disbelieve you on that point."

The children interested Leslie very much, and though they were shy at first, she soon won their favor. Leslie felt the spirit of cordiality that animated the household and made one feel so delightfully at home.

She had dropped upon a week of unusual gaiety: two elegant lawn parties, one with an out-of-door moonlight dance, several drives in picnic style to points of interest, a musicale, teas, and a very funny little comedietta. Leslie's week lengthened into almost a fortnight, and she reached home barely in time to welcome her brother and the bride.

"I shall just count the days until college opens," Leslie said with her good-by. "And,



Miss Craven, please do visit us and spend a Sunday, although we would take you in for a week any time."

Afterward, Helen wrestled with shopping and dressmakers, and the first month's senior exercises. She did not want to be caught unprepared and have some work to be made up. She was ambitious to have this the crowning year.

Willard's visit could not be refused. There were many things to talk about. A family from the city had rented the old home for three months and were so enamored of it that a proposal had been made for purchasing it. The family consisted of an old gentleman who had a longing for country diversions, his wife, his married son, and five growing children.

"I would rather settle nearer the city," explained Willard. "Mother simply couldn't live there alone, and Marjorie wants her; she planned this at first. These people offer a very fair price for the place; the deed is in mother's name, though we should all be willing to do whatever is best for her. So that will make mother very comfortable all her



days. There will be some hard things about it, but mother looks at it in a practical light. I shall board in the city; I did last winter, and I can run up every week. The parish is certainly a very attractive one, with work enough to keep one busy, and it isn't full of snobs, but there are many nice, cultured people and some thrifty middle-class working folk. There is a paper-mill, a wire factory, and enough labor to preserve a fair balance. Laurence is a fine clergyman, too."

But Willard found Helen inexorable on the point of an engagement.

"I want to be sure of myself; certain this is the best and wisest, the only true step to take. I shall be very busy, as I have said times before, and I do not want my interest diverted."

"But you do not seem to think about me," Willard replied in a despondent sort of tone.

She had been thinking steadily about him for the last three days. There was little fault to find in him. He was attractive, gentlemanly, intelligent, but nothing of a prig, quick to respond to a bit of fun, and with all



the readiness one acquires in society. What more could a girl ask? Nothing, if she loved him. It had been blind contact, not the necessity of loving. He did not touch the depths of her soul; had she truly any deep feelings? She stood aghast as she asked herself the question. A strong, definite personality was what some of the girls talked about, claimed, and emotional excitability was one of the signs of a rather weak character. College was to shape them into well-balanced women, better able to take up all the relations of life, to enjoy and to appreciate, to be influential in the circle they were called to fill. This was her ambition. Was she going to fail in it?

She was glad to be whirled along the way that had come to have a familiar look. At this town a man who didn't believe in college girls had entered during her first journey; here a woman, who considered them equally reprehensible, and that a girl's destiny was to "keep company" and marry, came in. The train was half-filled with girls. It was early now, and there were not many half-frightened girls who were not certain of their acceptance in the



freshman class. Mothers of some of the girls were with them, and sisters, also. One girl she remembered as a last summer senior who was evidently instilling fortitude into an irresolute face that betrayed hesitancy in every line.

"Another sacrifice," thought Helen. "She will never make a college girl."

Leslie Brooks stood on the platform, and grasped her hand warmly.

"I came last evening," she announced, "and was down to meet the noon train. We're filling up fast. Girls are entering for the second year, several of them from other places. Jarvis Hall will overflow. Our fame has gone abroad."

A group was standing uncertainly, and Leslie approached them.

"It's such an awful big place!" declared a young woman in amazement. "And such beautiful buildings and grounds! We're from the West, and everything is strange. Where ought we to go? I hate to seem so ignorant. I've been teaching in a seminary, too."

Leslie made a few inquiries and piloted



them to a place of refuge until their standing was established, explaining to them where they were to go for examinations, which were in progress now and would be for several days.

"I thought you lived in little houses, a dozen or so girls together," said another. "I read about it in a story."

"It is considered better to live in the halls, though some do go outside. You will soon get acquainted. Many of the girls are just as much strangers as you. Come this way."

"Are you one of the teachers?"

"Oh, no!"

"I thought you looked young for a teacher. I'm twenty-four. That isn't too old to begin, is it? I've been teaching to get enough money together; I've always wanted to go to college, and we six girls are all friends."

"I'm glad you know some one," returned Leslie. "That is a cheerful outlook."

"It's hard in the beginning, isn't it?" said Leslie to Helen.

"I found you in the beginning," returned Helen, with gratitude shining in her eyes.



They went to the Seniors' Hall. That, too, was filling up, and trunks and boxes stood about in the corridors. There were glad greetings and welcomes, bits of splendid vacations, and wretched ones without a bit of fun, dismal anticipations of the thorny path before them, a wonder if the seniors could have as much fun as the juniors, and one girl said:

"The sophs is the place for pure, unadulterated fun. You have gotten over the scare of the profs., and the girls' snubs, for you find they are no better or wiser than you, and you just don't care whether you get in the juniors or not. I wish I'd slipped up on more problems and stayed there another year."

"What a curious hodgepodge it all is!" declared Helen, her eyes twinkling with mirth. "It sounds like reading across the columns of a newspaper, as the sentences and complaints break in upon one another, but if you waited for one or two to finish, you would never get a chance yourself."

"Let us go to our room and put things in order. I have a nice, new rug that will look



very well, though it was a heart-break for my new sister-in-law. They had been furnishing simply and prettily in soft grays and browns, with a bit of lovely red for contrast, and this queer blue killed everything. It was terrible, so we just changed off with some articles I was going to pack away. I think Miss Bond will want to buy it, she is so fond of bizarre effects, but we will use it for awhile."

It was rather a queer pattern, with something that suggested Chinese dragons crawling about, but which were only impossible growths of sedgy blooms that must have grown in a blue and yellow sea.

"It really made the poor girl nervous. I can't see any sense in such things. But we will put the lounge across the corner with the bookcase back of it. I don't like my books too handy, selfish mortal that I am. You see, this will make quite a cosy corner with the ornaments and hangings."

"Why, it will be very artistic, and we will tread the dragons underfoot."

They worked industriously for awhile, Leslie breaking out now and then with enthu-



siasm over her visit to Miss Craven. There was a tap at the door.

"That's the tenth girl I've refused," began Leslie impatiently. "Hammer and nails and tack drawer and needles and thread. Oh!" in delighted surprise. "Miss Morse, is my face full of all ungracious lines? You are doubly welcome," and she caught the outstretched hand in both of hers.

"Were you indulging in tempers? It couldn't have been very bad," smilingly.

"Please have a subject given out for the first public essay on 'The Evils of Borrowing.'"

"And the worse evil of never returning," laughed Helen, her face radiant with pleasure. "It's just a delight to see you looking so well and full of animation. You had a splendid time. Sit down and tell us about it."

"That will keep. I've something that interests me still more. Oh, do you remember Stockton's 'House of Martha'?" and her face gleamed with amusement. "You know the hero went abroad and returned stuffed full of wonders that he was dying to unload."



"But we are ready to listen," declared Helen.

"The traveller with the pack was like myself, and I shared the fate of that redoubtable hero. There was so much to talk about with Sidney; he had been over the ground, but lo, when I began, he had a wondrous tale to unfold, and mine was pushed cavalierly aside. He had been to a sort of Garden of Eden place, called Hope."

"Oh! oh!" ejaculated Helen, her face rosy red.

"He went expecting a quiet time with an elderly relative who he supposed would be booky and prosy, and really he was in a perfect blaze of enthusiasm. There was a charming college girl, Miss Grant, and her most agreeable and delightful friend, Miss Craven, whose views of what might be done in the world quite coincided with his own; a praiseworthy library for the benefit of which he gave a talk; some remarkably intelligent people, musical, too; and a young farmer who has taken his fancy altogether. Why, I haven't recovered my surprise yet! Every



time I began about a picture or a church or a palace, it suggested to his fertile mind or imagination something at Hope. What enchantment did you use, Miss Grant? And wasn't that Miss Craven here at commencement?"

"And if you could see her home!" Leslie exclaimed, the delightful memory giving pretty lines to her face.

"Was he there, too?"

Both girls turned scarlet.

"That was impertinent," Miss Morse subjoined quickly. "I beg your pardon."

"No, he wasn't, but I was. It is like a lovely picture. I do not believe there is anything more attractive abroad."

"He seemed to know so much about it, and two sweet children she had sort of adopted."

"I suppose I am to blame for that," said Helen, with gay frankness. "She is the most modest body in the world, and she has a morbid horror of being admired for the money's sake, and there is ever so much of it. She would adopt me, too," with an ingenuous flush, "only I think I am not quite poor enough. We are the best of friends; I may



have said we were at school together. Oh, Miss Morse, I wish you knew her well!"

"It's funny, but Sidney said the same thing. Can't you invite her here and let me meet her in a friendly way? She might stay over a Sunday. There was another event that he couldn't participate in, to his chagrin. Miss Grant gave a talk on college life before the Ladies' Club, and he heard that it was very well done."

"I think I had greatness thrust upon me," and an embarrassed expression went fluttering over the girl's face. "I did try to do my training justice and not talk over the heads of my audience, keeping the great 'I' well in the background. We all had a very nice time, I do believe, and everybody liked your brother so much. I feel deeply obliged for the interest he took in my cousin Nat, who is really a fine young country fellow, bright and sensible."

"Sidney is so fond of young men, especially the ambitious ones who are trying to do their duty in that sphere to which it seems God has called them. He thinks the boy such an admirable son."



"He is just splendid in that respect. And Uncle Jason is the dearest — I really shall run short of adjectives," and the joy in her face was good to behold.

"Well, it seems as if you must have had a fine time. We haven't half-talked it out, and there will soon be a summons to dinner. We are filling up fast, I see. I hope we shall have an excellent year. Adieu, to be continued," and she glided away.

"Well, that *is* funny!" Helen dropped down on the couch and gave way to a tempest of amused laughter.

"Write a book, 'How It All Happened,' and make Mr. Morse marry Miss Craven."

A curious sensation flashed over Helen like a pang. Was *she* jealous of a lovely thing happening to Juliet? She remembered her fear about Mr. Gartney; that was different, of course, but he had become an ideal to Juliet now that he was past human love.

"We had better wash up and get into some clothes. The seniors must set a good example," Leslie suggested.

They did not start a moment too soon, for



the bells soon rang out their welcome invitation to the hungry girls hurrying in from the grounds. What a host of them there were!

"Let us go about, calling," began Leslie afterward. There was a little time before chapel. Girls were thronging out again into the wide, warm, September night, where only one glorious star had ventured out. There were faces of the last few years, fresh faces with a strange, uncertain expression and fearful questioning eyes, others with a sort of bravado that announced they were not going to be put down, and that they were as good as any one.

"I do not see Shirley Chardavoyne. Yet she said she was sure to come."

"Is she writing verses to you yet?"

A warm color touched Helen's face.

"Yes," she answered. "They are so beautiful that I wish they were on some other subject. I do wonder if one could change her regard or mood or temperament, or whatever it is. I hate to have so much good effort wasted."

"I don't blame her for having chosen such



a subject. But it is queer, when she hasn't gone wild over any other girl. She is so dainty and odd that others are attracted to her, and she receives the homage like a little queen. Well, a college is a study in girls."

They found some strangers inclined to be homesick already, and the cordiality warmed them. They had many questions to ask. Were the professors quite dreadful, saying sarcastic things and quizzing one about everything? And must one dress fashionably? Did the girls make fun of everything not up-to-date?

"We are taught to respect the Golden Rule as the great conduct of life," said Leslie gravely. "We don't always observe it, I am sorry to say, but that is the fault of the individual, not the college. There is a Christian Endeavor society, and a Whatsoever Club."

"Whatsoever," repeated one girl in amazement.

"'Whatsoever you would that men should do unto you,'" repeated Leslie with a grave smile. "You see, belonging to one or the



other keeps duty in one's mind. The chapel bell is ringing. Will you not go with us?"

"Oh, we shall be glad to! I belonged to the Endeavorers at home."

Helen fell behind with two of the girls.

"Isn't she sweet?" remarked one of them. "I do believe I shall like college real well if there are many girls like her. Is she your friend?" turning a side glance at Helen.

"My very dear friend. She took me in hand when I came two years ago. There are many nice girls."

"She's just lovely."

Helen paused when they came out to introduce the girls to the secretary of the Endeavorers, who gave them a warm invitation to meet with them.

Then Miss Morse said to Leslie, "Come to my room; I'm just tired out and shall lie on the lounge, but I want to hear you two girls talk. I'm interested in Hope. It has such a cheerful name."



## CHAPTER XIV

### SYMPATHY AND UNWISDOM

THE seniors and juniors had many things to put in motion. There was the tea to the younger classes, the Shakespeare Club to form over again, for some of their shining lights had been swallowed up by the great outside world, there was the *Miscellany* board to equip, and a class president to elect. A caucus was held for the last named. It was of great importance to the seniors, as that officer would be called upon for various duties through commencement week.

“We want a fine all-round girl, who is obliging, and yet not too yielding; who has firm principles and isn’t obstinate, if you can make the distinction; who is attractive and — harmonious, who has executive force —”

“And all the gifts the gods ever showered upon a mortal. Some one who will uphold



the honor of the class and may be an honor girl herself."

"Helen Grant," said the first speaker. "After the *emeute* among the freshies that time, they wanted her, and the sophs had planned to have her, but she stepped over their heads. She must be put in something for the honor of the college."

"I second that before it is a question."

"She will not accept. They want her for the speakership of the Association."

"Let's cut in first, and I'll tell you how to win. Select Miss Ferris for the other candidate."

"Miss Ferris!" A laugh went round. When it had subsided a student said:

"That's too black an eye for Miss Ferris. She is a thorough student and will carry off honors. She would know it wasn't because any one wanted her, and good gracious! it would spoil everything. No, we must have some one who is —"

"A nonentity, rather. Well, Emily Cross is pretty and stylish, and gives the daintiest spreads."



“That would be better, though I think Miss Ferris would be up to the seventh heaven if the nomination were tendered her.”

“We can’t all be presidents, and I don’t want to be. I shall have to save my best energies to pull through and do some minor work. Miss Grant is always in advance of her work, and it’s a good way, let me tell you, when you once get started. There’s where the rub comes in. We ought to have started in vacation.”

“We were advised to play and run about in vacation.”

There was not a dissenting voice. Helen would have felt proud of the unanimity had she known it. And now every one was doubly charged not to breathe it to a soul except Leslie Brooks, who was to exhort Helen to accept.

Leslie came in one afternoon and flung herself down on the lounge.

“That unnecessary force means something disagreeable has happened. I am beginning to be a — a — not a mind-reader, but a reader of the mind acting on the body.”



Leslie laughed, and the crease went out of her forehead.

"If you please, I have been pushed upon the *Miscellany* staff, instead of being dropped out. It isn't quite the thing, I think, but there is no law against it. I suppose I have the time, and I carried off honors for the finest critical reviews. They were so insistent I couldn't well decline. And now I have to look up my staff."

"Please don't look in my direction," said Helen in a most beseeching tone. "I should be so sorry to deny any one, that I know I would accept all manner of trash. I have an immense sympathy for editors. I have a great sympathy for those who think they have a genius when they have only an assimilation of other people's ideas, or those who have the vanity to think their early efforts up to the highest mark. The awakening must be bitter."

"Oh, I'm going to let you off, only you must hunt up your poet and get her to do something worth while! The matter for the



first number is in hand, so I am free from that anxiety."

"Miss Chardavoyne returned on Monday. She has been off on a tour with some friends. The girls were eager to see her, so she has some charm."

"I think she has several charms. I wish Miss Craven could see her."

"I believe I'll ask her here for the holidays; at least, right away after Christmas, so the children will not be disappointed."

A deputation waited upon Miss Grant to notify her that she had been put in nomination for class president. Helen was amazed. The matter had been kept so quiet that half the class did not know it; the other half had been bound to secrecy.

"Why, I can't consider it!" protested Helen. "I have a great deal to do this year. Then — am I really fitted for it?"

"What you lack, you can learn. Miss Holland made a very nice president for the juniors, and she began by not knowing anything. Haven't you some sort of duty to



your class, to your Alma Mater? Must you shirk a little trouble?"

"I may not be elected."

"I wonder if that would please you."

"No, it wouldn't; it would mortify me. I'd much rather not stand at all!" she exclaimed honestly.

"There will be two candidates. Haven't you learned that the bitter sometimes comes instead of the sweet? The loser will have to take it philosophically. And, Helen, it *is* an honor. I think the girls will all want you."

"I am ashamed," Helen began after a pause. "Who is the other?"

"Emily Cross."

"Well, she is very effective, more truly ornamental than I should be. She and Miss Saybrook were great friends last year. Oh, why didn't they take Miss Saybrook! She is brilliant and — fascinating, when she chooses."

"And she had the finest spreads; nut cake, pound cake, boxes of nuts picked out, choicest confections. She has a way of wanting you to believe she values your society for your personal qualities, respects your opinions, and



really flatters, I think. How she managed to pass I cannot divine. She is superficial and insincere, bright, amusing, rather audacious. I wonder why she came to college, unless it was for the fun and variety. What would she do if she were thrown on her own resources? Such a girl would not adorn a position that demanded any of the higher qualities. That sounds unkind, but such girls never do credit to college training, but bring it into disrepute rather, and it always hurts me to have them quoted as examples. Then, think of your fine and noble Miss Bradshaw! The whole class admired her; the teachers, as well."

That was true enough.

Miss Grant was nominated unanimously. There was little need of a second candidate, and in the week before the election every girl expressed her satisfaction in the choice.

Miss Cross accepted the compliment at first with a good deal of pleasure, but she saw the trend of the matter and considered herself rather ill-used in being made merely a foil.

"If you want to raise yourself in the esteem of the class," said a friendly, sensible girl,



“withdraw your name at the beginning of the balloting. Just make a neat little speech, and advise your followers, for you would have some, of course, to vote for Miss Grant.”

“I suppose there is no chance, not even for vice-president,” rather reluctantly. She did covet some of the honors.

“The ticket is made up, you see. No, that is your best move. There are some other offices; we are not half through.”

Miss Cross wrote and rewrote her declination, and had a friend go over it. Then she committed it to memory, and it was very effectively done, winning for her no little commendation. It was much nicer than being a defeated candidate.

It was a beautiful autumn, and out-of-door sports were very tempting. They brought rosy cheeks and bright eyes, supple limbs, and exuberant spirits. True it was, that with some girls, recitations and papers suffered. The tea to the freshman class was a great success.

Miss Chardavoyne was quite distant at first with Helen.

“So many people adore you,” she said,



“that my poor, little love can hardly count. There isn’t anything much to me — I’ve been advised to give up some of the studies; there’s no use of my hammering at Greek — father said no girl could do it any sort of justice. Professor Waite recommended literature, and I like that. It was so lovely to come back and be with the girls, for it was so dreary at home. My sister is married now, and mother and father spend their time together. There are some gay cousins in Philadelphia, but they think I am queer. I’d like some one to really love me, but I can’t seem to choose any girl, though there are very pleasant likes, preferences — no, that isn’t quite it, either.”

The wistful face with its appealing dark eyes went to Helen’s heart. Why not do a little of the good work for this sweet, innocent, untrained soul?

“I do more than merely like you,” Helen said in a tender tone. “And I want you to know my friend, Miss Brooks, real well; she is much interested in your gift. You must come to our room and have a nice evening with us. And there is a Miss Denman who



would like to know you. Why, there are so many nice students — ”

“ But you see they have other friends. And when a group stand with their arms around each other, laughing and chatting, my heart aches. They come in when I ask them to tea, but somehow, I can't be full of fun and jests and those witty replies they make to each other. Why, I sometimes think I must be queer! ”

Helen gave her a hug; and then they ran across Lorraine, who in her turn felt a little defrauded of the intimacy she had counted on. True, she saw Helen every day and met her in the chapel, the library, and the Students' Association, and she, too, was a welcome visitor in Miss Morse's room.

Helen soon fell into the routine duties of her office, and made a charming president. But there was so much to do everywhere. With the societies and clubs, and the desire to take in all she could, to make all the advance possible, for she was proud of her standing, she sometimes grew quite weary, and the thought that this was her last year would in-



trude. Never had girls seemed so charming to her, or the faculty so delightful. And it was hard to refuse joining different organizations.

"If you'll only come in, we won't ask you to do much of anything," they pleaded.

Out-of-doors was exhilarating. After all, few of the seniors stood on their dignity; in the games and sports they were not a day over sixteen.

One of the juniors said, "Why, I do not feel as old as when I was a freshman! And I was afraid I should be almost superannuated when I was through; twenty-two looked old to me. And now I think I shall be just in the most charming dawn of womanhood."

"That is the way to look at it," rejoined Professor Jordan, who stood among a bevy of girls. "You are not to allow yourselves to get old. Think how many splendid women there are who are doing the world's work and have passed the half-century. They have bright eyes, and eager, smiling faces, and are up-to-date in everything."

Miss Carol Saybrook had worked her way



to the senior class and was considered a rather fascinating girl. She did dress elegantly, had a bright sort of wit, and a pathetic side that she allowed to crop out now and then, but drew it back again with the brief explanation that every one had trouble of some kind and did not want to be bored with that of other people. Her sigh would end with a beguiling smile.

Her father had married a second time, and she was not on good terms with her step-mother. There were two younger children, "and there may be a great houseful," rather indignantly. "Father is not a rich man, either, and if he should die we should all be beggars, I suppose."

She did not appear in any great straits now.

Helen had experienced a rather curious interest in her, and of late they had taken some walks together, just by accident, it seemed.

"I've been looking for you everywhere," Lorraine exclaimed complainingly, as she came up the walk only a few moments before dinner hour. "I went to your room, Miss Morse's, and the library, and out on the tennis



court. They were having a fine game. And two days ago you disappeared mysteriously. If you were a soph, I should say you had been given a bad afternoon with a mountain of shortcomings."

"I was walking."

"What sent you off alone?"

Helen laughed, but just then the dinner bell pealed out its summons, and she ran. Lorraine was the least bit jealous, not tiresomely so, and Leslie Brooks was very dear to her. She had also taken a great fancy to Miss Chardavoyne, but somehow she did not altogether like Miss Saybrook. She accepted Leslie's estimate of her.

"Leslie isn't quite fair to her, I think," Helen mused. "She is curious, and though many of her epigrams are second-hand, they are always pat. And it must be hard to be crowded out of her father's affection."

And not long after, Helen found herself straying off again with Miss Saybrook without the least design on her own part.

"I don't know just why you win one to a confidential mood," Miss Saybrook said.



“You are so different from the average girl. I do hope you will be very happy, Miss Grant, and yet I always fear for these large-hearted, generous, sympathetic girls. Commonplace people get more out of life, more out of their friends, and suffer less. You see, misfortunes never rest very heavily on them; they know how to shift them off on others. But when you keep sorrows to yourself — oh, I don’t want to bore you —”

Her tone fell to pathos, her beautiful eyes were limpid and had the look of a hunted animal appealing for pity. They moved Helen in a sympathizing manner.

“Oh, do not think of that! If you have any trouble —” Did she really want the confidence? How many other girls had it been given to, she wondered.

“I have a big question to decide. I’d like to know how it looks to some one with a little common sense. The ordinary girl is all for love, or the quality she thinks is love, and she scouts anything less in a marriage, but with a little experience she learns a great many



things, and that one cannot live altogether on love."

"No," returned Helen seriously. She did not especially care about a dissertation on love.

"No, you cannot live on love!" she said with a peculiar emphasis. "It may be a defect in education," with a touch of sarcasm. "And I'm tired of being poor."

"But it doesn't seem to me that you are very poor."

"Not up to this point, perhaps. Almost six years ago father married a young woman of twenty-three. He was just past forty. My mother left me some handsome jewels and a thousand dollars. My stepmother didn't like me, wanted to get rid of me, in fact. Oh, there's no love lost between us! I said I would go to college, that would be all I would ask of him. Davenport is a wretched little place; father has a big house, and hundreds of acres of land pretty well worn out, as Southern farms are. There is no society there. I like college life for the fun and variety, the friends one makes. I've had a nice



time every vacation, and my nice times, of course, end next summer. I should just hate to teach; I could not abide the confinement of office work, or waiting in a store."

She glanced up at Helen in an inquiring manner, as if testing her listener.

"I expect to teach," Helen said with decision. Yet, she really could not imagine Miss Saybrook succeeding in that capacity. She was superficial; she would not get a diploma.

"Well — I just couldn't, there now! I should want to shut myself in a room and turn on the gas. There's no use in living unless you can have some of the things you want. I hate poverty and everything belonging to it. Father thinks he has done his duty by me; no doubt there'll be a houseful of children to educate. He should have had more sense than to marry that way."

"But what will you do?" asked Helen with a puzzled air. She did not for an instant believe Miss Saybrook would lay down life easily.

"I can marry. He is a rich New York man, a widower, with two married sons; no



encumbrance, you see. He is sixty; I shall be twenty-two in the spring."

"But do you —" No, she would not tell the story that way if she cared for him especially. Was he worthy of regard?

Carol laughed with a hard sort of indifference.

"Oh, I'm not in love! Don't be so much of a chicken as to ask me that! But I can have all the luxuries of life, journeys, clothes, jewels, society, pleasures. Isn't it worth thinking about?"

Helen studied her. The eyes said, "Oh, don't judge me too hardly!" and the girl experienced a strange sort of pity for her.

"If you respect him," she began slowly, "if he has your confidence, your — oh, I don't know what to say! Think how old he is — almost forty years —"

"Men at that time of life are partial to young wives. I am stylish, yes, good-looking," smiling ironically. "He will get some one to be proud of. I don't expect the extravagant love of a young man; that is mostly imagination. Oh, yes, I can see you are hor-



rified! You are a sort of practical girl, too; not one of the high-flown sort, full of romantic ideas. But think what it would be to me to be set adrift in the world, or to grow old in that dead and half-alive sort of place, and bicker continually with a grasping young step-mother, grudging every penny for her own children. *You* have so many real friends. Some one said a young woman who adored you was an immense heiress and had a splendid home of her own. If I had a place like that to go to, or a friend like that to tide me over these shoals and quicksands! Oh, say you pity me a little!" in an imploring tone. "I'm not much given to asking sympathy."

"I do feel very, very sorry for you," Helen replied sincerely. "Of course, I have always known I must depend upon myself —"

"But you see I wasn't brought up in this resolute, practical, utilitarian sort of way. I couldn't fight through, as these self-made women do; I really couldn't. I'd rather marry some rich young man, but he doesn't seem to materialize. Oh, I don't know why I told you all this! No one can help me to



decide. Only, when you see me taking part in all the holiday plans and pleasures, almost as if I was feather-brained, you will know I have a heart that can ache. I won't ask your good opinion; only a little kindly charity. Ugh! how that wind blows. Let us race up to the hall; I'm chilled through."

She grasped Helen's hand and they flew along together.

"I like you very, very much!" she exclaimed in a tone that was both ardent and impressive.

They were rehearsing for a little comedy that evening, and Miss Saybrook was gay and eager, taking her part to perfection.

"Carol Saybrook would make a splendid actress," said some one. "I should think the life would tempt her."

"The money and the honors might if she was sure of winning them. But it isn't such an easy matter, if one sets out to reach the high places," was the rejoinder.

And now Christmas plans came on apace. Who was to go home, or elsewhere; who was to stay, lonely and forlorn?



"I am, for one," declared Leslie Brooks. "My sister-in-law wants to keep the feast with her own family, which is right enough. And there is a good deal of work I would like to do."

Helen was undecided. Mrs. Bell wrote from Vernon Park that they were all well and happy, and that Marjorie had a little daughter. They hoped she might spend a few days with them.

"Girls," said Miss Morse, as several were passing the evening in her room, "I have a plan to propose. All of Mrs. Carter's girls are going away. I'd like for once to see how it would seem to be a real householder. How many of you will visit me for a week? And have you any friends you could invite? That pretty, winsome, little Chardavoyne girl is not going anywhere; home is too far. I've taken quite a fancy to her. She will never make a great scholar, but I do think she has the gift of poesy. So I have asked her and she is just delighted; and now, Helen, I am going to ask you, and beg you to invite your friend, Miss Craven."



"Will I have to beg entrance to this charmed circle?" inquired Leslie, with a dainty air of deprecation that settled into an amused smile.

"I was coming round to you. And Lorraine Denman, Margaret Van Duyne — that makes six — and if you have any choice friends, I think I should like one or two more. And my brother will come for a few days. I will give you all permission to invite any gentleman friends to dinners, or make little receptions for them."

"Why, I think it is just delightful!"

"Christmas falls on Sunday. Friday, everything will be cleared up, but we will begin on Monday and take the whole week and put in it all the pleasure we can. My brother will likely be along by Tuesday; church work will be over then."

"And Miss Craven will hardly be able to get away sooner. She will have her little girls to look after."

"Miss Van Duyne is to ask a cousin, a young West Point graduate who is to go off somewhere about the middle of next month.



I'm not going to be a very severe chaperone, because I can depend upon you all. But it is to be a little bit of home-making, and you must all bring your share."

"Why, it will be just enchanting!" declared Leslie. "Miss Morse, you ought to be the real mother of a family of girls."

"Yes," Miss Morse responded, with a funny twinkle that seemed to spread from her eyes to the lines about her mouth. "I've had serious thoughts of marrying some widower with about five girls. I should want them to be intelligent, healthy, comparatively good-tempered, and each one to have some especial grace or gift. And with all my efforts, I haven't been able to find just the right sort of widower, or the girls."

They all laughed heartily. "Oh, Miss Morse!" cried Lorraine, "I'm quite sure there would be one disagreeable girl among them."

Shirley caught the professor's hand.

"I'd even be the disagreeable girl," she said in a soft, wistful tone, "because you



could train me, and it would be a delight to please you."

"Thank you;" Miss Morse returned the pressure.

So they settled it with Mrs. Carter, and those who had friends to invite wrote to them. The classes planned for Christmas eve a great procession with those that remained. It had to be on Saturday evening. There was to be a Santa Claus, a small wagon of presents drawn by four girls all wrapped in furs, a band with all sorts of improvised music, from horns to combs and mouth organs.

Saturday morning, Helen was alone in the room, when Miss Saybrook entered, glancing around furtively. She had a wild, entreating look and had been crying, but Helen was struck with the beauty of her face in tears. How many different expressions it could wear!

"Oh, what is it?" she inquired apprehensively.

"Oh, my dear Miss Grant, I have come to throw myself upon your mercy! I am in bitter, bitter trouble! I sometimes feel as if it



would be a relief to go out of the world. I can't face disgrace, and if I can't find a little help, it will be that. The friend on whom I thought I could rely went away yesterday noon. It is dreadful!" and she dabbed her cheeks with her dainty, lace handkerchief.

"But what is it?" Helen was deeply moved by the apparent anguish that she could not suspect was assumed.

"It's horrid! I suppose I ought to go to prison for it. You see" — her voice trembled with emotion, and her color came and went — "father sent the last of the money for the term, and I was owing something that a man threatened to sue for, and just on the impulse of the moment I paid it with that money. Father won't send again until the beginning of the term, and I've been notified — the second time. You know what that means! And in a week or ten days I shall have the money from some other source. But just now —" and her voice ended with a rush of sobs she had been holding back, as she buried her face in Helen's new poppy cushion.

Helen guessed, but did not speak. She was



thinking of the beautiful, new, tailored suit, in a deep maroon broadcloth, fur-trimmed, that came a month ago, in which Miss Saybrook looked superb, and the elegant silver-gray, new in October.

"You see, if I could have a hundred dollars for ten or twelve days, I should be all right. Can't you, oh, won't you, lend me that? It's only such a little while. I can't face the — the disgrace! Oh! I should not have done it, but I was so frightened when the man threatened to sue —"

"I haven't a hundred dollars by me," Helen said slowly. She felt sorry for her against her better judgment. To be disgraced just for ten days!

"You see, when I come back I shall have the money. I have a very good friend who can get it out of father in time. He promised to see me through college, and all those years I was his only idolized child. It's cruel! He wouldn't act so but for that selfish thing in my mother's place!"

"Must it be a hundred?" Helen inquired.



“That is due the college. Perhaps I could beg off part —”

“I might get it for you —” hesitatingly.

“Oh, if you could or would!” imploringly.

Girls had been used to borrowing small sums, and Helen had lent out quarters and half-dollars that had not been returned. This was different, and a flood of remembrances rushed over Helen, talks on kindness, helpfulness, the aim of the larger life that thought no evil, that diffused a finer and sweeter atmosphere, that taught them to truly love one another, for even the publicans could be good to their own. In her moment of exaltation, such as heroic girls have, she said:

“Yes, I will do it for you.”

“Oh, you *are* an angel!” Miss Saybrook sprang up and clasped her arms about Helen, laid her wet cheek against that of the other. “Giving the money back will not repay you, and you can never wholly realize my gratitude, for you have not been in such awful straits. It’s just salvation for me.”

“When did you want to go?” Helen was afraid she was beginning to repent, and she



crowded down the misgiving as being uncharitable.

“The stage will be here at one. I shall have to take my trunk, and that’s a nuisance, too.”

Helen went to her drawer. There was seventy dollars. She had not quite finished her Christmas buying; she could get a little from Leslie or Lorraine.

“There is seventy,” she said. “I will give you the remaining thirty —”

“Just after lunch, when I say good-by to you. Oh, you don’t know what you have saved me from!” with an impressiveness that went to Helen’s heart.

She stood lost in thought when Leslie entered, and made her request with heightened color.

“My dear girl,” said Leslie, “you will be welcome to it, and I am glad to oblige you, for you so seldom ask favors. Don’t be vexed with me if I give you a little good advice. If you have not bought your gifts for to-night, remember nothing is to be expensive. It is



the fun of the thing, not any test of good wishes."

Helen nodded as if she understood that and thanked her, and when Miss Saybrook bade her a rather effusive good-by, she slipped the money into her hand.



## CHAPTER XV

### A MAKE - BELIEVE HOUSE - PARTY

A PARTY went to Bedford in the afternoon and came home laden with spoils. Names were affixed to various bundles that were piled in bags and baskets. After chapel, when darkness had set in, for there was no moon, a motley procession seemed suddenly to spring up out of the ground. Colored and white lanterns were swung from side to side. A band preceded the procession; horns, triangles, tin pans for drums, and every unmusical adjunct tried to keep time in college choruses, and a few original ones invented for the occasion. Small express-wagons were loaded and drawn by shaggy creatures. A Santa Claus, swinging a lantern, accompanied each one. He blew a horn and called on the residents of the various halls to come out and receive his remembrance.



All those who had remained at college obeyed the summons. The merriest of extravagant speeches were made as the gifts, well wrapped in paper to add to their size, were bundled out on front porches. There were exclamations expressive of great delight, and the motley crew went their way with cheers, breaking into new songs and laughter. The sophomores and freshmen were taken by surprise, not having been let in the secret. Only those remaining in the halls were the recipients of gifts, some very funny, some consisting of a Christmas card or crêpe flowers.

The girls rushed out. Oh! what was it? Who was it? Merely Santa Claus, or rather several of him, as it was too arduous an undertaking for one. There was wild cheering and laughter. Invitations to meet for a banquet in the dining-room of Penrose Hall were screamed out.

"It's a seniors' frolic!" declared some one. "I don't see how they kept it so close. And those songs! Oh, what was in your bundle?"

The bundles might hold a woolly lamb, a squealing pig, or one that grunted when you



dropped a penny in his back; a small tin candlestick to light the recipient on the path of knowledge; and so on to no end of amusing articles.

The procession seemed to melt away; the janitor took charge of the empty wagons; fur robes and cloaks were cast aside, flung down anywhere; girls hustled into fine gowns, and by nine o'clock the dining-room began to fill up.

"It's no finer than ours!" declared a three months' freshman. "I thought the seniors lived in great state."

Several members of the faculty, with the president, had the place of honor at the head of the table. Girls in dainty white caps and aprons, with a sprig of holly at one shoulder, were seating the guests. Everything was suggestive of Christmas cheer, but the tremendous turkey was an adroitly covered frame filled with bonbons. But there were plates of the real article, sliced, pink ham, tempting beef, and various viands. Speeches were rendered in verse, none exceeding eight lines, and "borrowing" was cordially tolerated, as



well as French, German, and Latin. Toasts were given and witty replies made, and all was jollity, until the clock struck twelve, when all the voices joined in a beautiful Christmas carol.

“ I wouldn’t have missed it for anything! ” declared one girl in a joyful tone. “ I never heard so many funny verses and speeches in all my life. And that procession was worth seeing. What good times college girls do have! ”

Christmas began rather gray and threatening. There was a delightful chapel service, a midday dinner with the best of cheer; yet, since it was Sunday, all was grave and decorous. The sun came out in the afternoon, and the air was soft and still as if in reverence.

Monday was a kind of gala-day. Girls went in town, or visited in each other’s rooms, looked over the gifts that kept coming in, made plans, and Miss Morse marshalled her new family to Mrs. Carter’s. How snug and cosy they looked, ranged around the grate, and telling bits of experience and hopes for the future! Shirley Chardavoyne sat on an otto-



man close beside Miss Morse, listening to all the talk, turning her soft eyes, eager with interest, from one to another. If Miss Morse only could or would take her in hand, Helen thought. It needed some one with experience in the formation of character to shape her untrained youth, which was really younger than her years.

What a delightful play-breakfast it was! They all bethought themselves of an appropriate verse, and it proved very entertaining.

Shortly after noon, Leslie and Helen went to the station for Miss Craven, who was much interested in the picnic visit.

“Only I have been thinking — we ought to have asked you to bring the little girls; they are so quaint and sweet. Were they willing to give you up?”

A tender light passed over Miss Craven's face and left a smile, as she said:

“They are very happy with their grand-mamma, as they call Mrs. Howard. I spent three days at school with them, and had such a pleasant visit with Mrs. Aldred. All the old girls are gone, and it seems quite strange.



Oh, Helen, do you remember Miss Kent and Miss Logan? They are in New York; Miss Kent is in a medical school and doing some hospital work, and Miss Logan keeps house. They rent several furnished rooms to nurses. I am going to call on them when I go to the city."

"Oh, that will be nice! I shall like to hear about them. And this is the dear head of our present household, Miss Morse."

"I thought I would come down and meet you; Miss Van Duyne is busy with letters, and Lorraine is giving your protégée a music lesson. We have found a new quality in her genius — she improvises beautifully. Miss Craven, allow me to welcome you most heartily to our family rooftree and to express my pleasure at meeting you. It seems that you and Miss Grant were great attractions at Hope last summer."

"We had a delightful time, though I think your brother and Mr. Walters helped," replied Miss Craven. "I felt quite at home there, as it was not my first visit. And I am happy to be included in your hospitality."



Miss Morse ushered them in the homelike sitting-room. Lorraine rose with a soft winsome flush on her cheek; Shirley looked abashed.

Juliet was to share Helen's room. It was bright with girls' belongings; a little too crowded, Helen thought.

"But the tendency is to accumulate so many things — keepsakes," remarked Helen. "I begin to wish there was not so much giving, yet it is pleasant to be remembered. And after a year or two, you can give the articles away, or make a bonfire of them."

"Or send them to the children's homes and hospitals, or even the social settlements. They find so many who are destitute of the prettinesses of life, while they do manage to get the necessities. What a delightful plan this was of Miss Morse's! I am so glad to know her."

"And Mr. Morse is to come, and Willard Bell," laughing. "Then, there is a young West Pointer, a Lieutenant Van Duyne, so we are to be quite favored — or the gentlemen will be. Each may have two girls."

"What about Willard?"



"Nothing at all," Helen replied with a touch of embarrassment. "I am to have this year to myself. I can't study for honors and be in love. I am in quest of mental food, not romantic sustenance."

"Helen, you are a rather unusual girl," Juliet replied gravely.

"Oh, I hope that doesn't mean unpleasant! Haven't you refused an offer or two? Confess, now," glancing at her with keen, mischievous eyes.

"But you see —" protestingly.

"And you will see I have tried. I like him so much, and that is what puzzles me. I do believe there was a brief while that I would have consented, to make his father happy. Mr. Bell was an ideal father. And since that sad time has softened and faded a little, the impression has gone. I'm a selfish sort of girl, not the kind that makes heroic sacrifices."

"Real love doesn't demand that."

"Oh, let us leave love and lovers alone!" replied Helen impatiently. "We are just going to have a week of good times. I want you to like Miss Morse; all of them, in fact.



And I want you to study Shirley Chardavoyne. If she had no parents, I should beg you to adopt her. She's a peculiar little body. I thought her rather weak and romantic at first, but I find she has a subtle sort of strength, a warm, waiting heart, that when it has faith in you will sit and be content with a crumb. I hope she will take a wider range. Miss Morse is interested in her."

"Where are the gentlemen to stay?"

"Oh, they can go in to Bedford, or they may find some cottages about! Mrs. Bell is with her daughter, Mrs. Hollis, and I knew a visit from me would not be convenient. I was really glad. There, let us drop the subject," with a touch of impatience.

The afternoon turned off dull. They went over to the library and looked at some fine engravings and had a talk on books, made more interesting by some schoolgirl heresies that amused Miss Morse. The short, winter day drew to a close, and she declared that she wanted them to return to their "ain fire-side."

And they found a young man stretched out



in the Morris-chair before the fire, the very picture of comfort, who rose leisurely, as if in no wise abashed.

“Why — I thought you could not come until the late train!” his sister said in surprise.

“I found that I could; that made the difference,” in a half-laughing tone. “So I sat down by the fire and indulged in pleasant anticipations. Miss Grant and Miss Craven, it affords me sincere gratification to meet you again. I was afraid I would have to wait for commencement.”

Then he turned courteously to the other group and was introduced. There was an agreeable confusion of voices, and strictures on the air that was sharp and biting, much running to and fro, doffing coats and wraps, and finding on their return an inviting circle of chairs in which they were requested to seat themselves. Mr. Morse proved quite equal to their entertainment, for in a few moments he had them all talking, and then he found himself listening with interest to an account of their Christmas fun.



“Do you have to get up new things every year to surprise each other?” he asked. “We are settled upon Christmas-trees, but it is hard sometimes to remember what you gave a boy or girl last year.”

“It is the first Christmas I ever spent here,” said Lorraine. “And I really did enjoy it wonderfully. But you are not compelled to do anything for the pleasure or gratification of those who stay, are you, Miss Morse?”

“Why, no! But I think it was very good of you girls,” was the answer. “This is only the second Christmas I have spent here. On the first occasion, we had a grand concert.”

They were summoned to tea, and as Leslie said, when they dispersed for the night, they might have known Mr. Morse for years, he was so social and cast about so little restraint. They had not hesitated to compare college life, and he had recounted some of his own experiences which were very amusing.

“He certainly is delightful,” Juliet said enthusiastically. “I was sorry at first to see him, we were so cosy and chatty, just girls together. He has so few mannerisms; he



doesn't seem at all afraid you will not pay respect to his clerical position, but he makes his standing as a Christian gentleman so decided, no one can mistake it. That is what I liked about him at Hope."

Helen studied Juliet, who was folding laces in her careful way. She was dainty and orderly about everything. There was an enthusiasm in her tone that Helen never remembered being used about a man before. Was she unconscious of it?

The lieutenant came the next day. He was a bright, breezy fellow, with a round, rosy face, clear blue eyes, and ready for a laugh at the slightest provocation. He had been reared in his cousin's family, where now the two older girls were married, and he and Margaret were great chums. In an hour he had affiliated with all the girls, except Shirley, who was seized with an unaccountable fit of shyness.

They planned what they should do. There was splendid skating on a pond with a winding creek half a mile off, and there was a small house of rest, kept nice and warm, where



one could get a cup of coffee or tea and a sandwich, and also hire skates.

Miss Morse did not skate; neither did Shirley, though she was learning.

"I'd rather stay at home with the piano," she said.

"The lieutenant and I will take good care of the girls, Margaret; you need not worry. If they fall in the pond I am quite sure we can fish them out. I have done it before."

"Oh, no, Mr. Morse! We never went out skating before, and I never have fallen in," laughed Leslie.

"I stand corrected." He made a very low bow. "But we are at your service, even on the slightest tumble."

"Will you go down to the noon train and see if Mr. Bell is there?" Helen begged of Miss Morse, who assented cheerfully.

They went off in a merry mood. Shirley and Miss Morse spent a nice hour getting better acquainted, then had a pleasant walk, but no young man came on the train. Shirley was rather pleased, as they went to Music



Hall and Miss Morse played on the organ for her.

If Helen felt a little piqued at Willard's tardiness when he had seemed so impatient, it did not interfere with her enjoyment. They were all ready for a walk over to the library after dinner, and there they found Professor Blake browsing around. He congratulated Helen cordially on her standing, but said he sometimes regretted he had helped to push her ahead, as they should lose her a year sooner.

"And I shall really hate to leave," Helen replied. "I don't wonder girls get positively enamored of college life toward the last."

"There is the postgraduate course," he replied with a persuasive sort of smile that lighted up his spare face. "Girls like you do honor to college life."

"Oh, thank you, for rating me so highly!" and her eyes shone with a pleased light.

Willard Bell reached them the next day at noon. He had been very much engrossed, and there was such a party of girls — he could meet girls every evening of his life if he chose,



but there was nothing to him like the times in the old house when she was one of them. "I never knew any other girl who fitted in so admirably as you."

"I want you to see the girls in Miss Morse's party," she began with a kind of cheerful evasiveness. "You see charming qualities in a good many girls, but you can't take a tithe to your inmost heart. These are the ones I have come to love the best."

"You are a very diffusive sort of girl, I think," he returned rather complainingly.

"I do not make a bid for any one's regard," she said with some spirit. "And when others are kind and delightful—" no, she would not show resentment. "That pretty little Southerner who writes verses to me is in our party. Oh, there are Lorraine and Shirley now!"

"Well, they have pretty names. It must be flattering to have verses written to you."

Shirley looked especially pretty. Her cheeks were a rose-pink, — she seldom turned red, — her eyes had a luminous, appealing softness, the ends of her hair were blown



about under her white tam, and there was a fluffy light boa about her neck. One wouldn't think so much of the prettiness as of the exceeding picturesqueness. Lorraine was bright and charming, as well. Willard could not be captious; pretty girls always gave him a flush of good-nature.

He and the lieutenant fraternized cordially, and they were soon devoted to the two younger girls. Helen and Leslie seemed to pair off, and the clergyman was left oftener for Miss Craven. Helen remembered the touch of jealousy Willard had evinced, and resolved to do nothing to intensify it. She had no coquettishness in her nature; she could not even feel hurt at his evident enjoyment. Shirley certainly had never been so attractive.

They went over to the sophomore hall and had a very gay time with the girls. Young Van Duyne and Willard were to leave the next afternoon.

With all the frolic, Helen seemed to have another side to her nature, and that kept her thoughts on the two men, Willard and Mr. Morse. Willard was certainly attractive,



affectionate, charming in many ways, but it seemed as if his enjoyments must revolve about himself. His was a nature that did not go out of its own orbit, that was not overflowing into other lives. Perhaps that might be in a measure due to his profession. He was refined and gentlemanly, up in the little niceties of society, but was always taking his individual self along; it was not vanity, but it might be personality.

How had she come to understand these little points that one would hardly put in words? Was it the contrast with this broader, finer nature, higher of purpose, grander of soul? Yes, that was it; a nature that would always be widening to its privileges and powers; a man who could meet with the lowly on middle ground, not sinking to any level and making visible the gulf between, not dragging them up to heights which they could not appreciate and enjoy.

They sat a long while over their breakfast the next morning, for the men came in by special invitation. They spiced the meal with light drollery, witty quotations, bits of Latin,



occasionally misquoted for the fun of it, ludicrous mistakes they had made that they could now laugh over. It was a peerless, winter day, with brilliant sun, a sky of flawless blue, and no wind. The leafless trees stood out distinctly, making a fine India-ink tracery against the curving horizon. Here was the tennis court, here were held the out-of-door sports, the hurdles, and here the speedway, and the ball-ground.

Shirley was confiding to Willard how strange she felt among the multitude of girls when she had gone out to see the prize dash, and how Helen had come in first, how proud and brave she looked, like a flying nymph, and how she had fallen in love with her on the spot, and been inspired with some verses, and their after history.

"That's odd," he said. "I believe I have them somewhere. Helen sent me a copy of the *Miscellany*."

"Then I took my revenge by writing verses that could not be altered. In that first poem I was the lover, you know, just as if I had



been — well, I do suppose girls like men the best, but I shouldn't want to be a man."

"The world would be the loser if you were," he replied gallantly.

"Because," she added simply, with no eagerness, but as if she was stating any ordinary fact of life, "I hope to be loved some day. Don't you suppose many of the romances and poems are true?"

"They ought to be." He fancied some tender soul, strongly masculine as well, gathering this odd, little creature in his arms in a transport of rapture.

The girls went in a body to wish their two guests a safe journey. Willard and Helen walked together.

"I haven't seen much of you," he began, "but it seems as if we never did nowadays. Still, it has been very pleasant. Your Miss Morse is fine, and doesn't nip a bit of fun in the bud. But I'm not sure college is the best thing for the girl who expects to marry the ordinary man and be happy. They get too self-conscious; they have too much care for the world at large, a sort of moral responsi-



bility that leads them continually to try to better things and people who are already satisfied. I like Miss Chardavoyne the best of the three girls. She just adores you. How she will put her whole soul in love some day!"

"She *is* charming," was the cordial reply.

"Helen, I don't believe you half-appreciate her regard." Was Helen capable of understanding it?

"Why can't I run up some Saturday?" he asked as she made no reply.

"Why — yes, and there is Easter. After that, I shall retire to the cloisters of scholastic life and become invisible until commencement."

The train came along. There were other girls saying good-by to friends, and there was quite a procession that walked back.

There had been so much confusion and gaiety that a quiet evening was a relief. They sat in a circle and listened to Mr. Morse as he read Hamilton Mabie's "Forest of Arden." Shirley sat on the ottoman and leaned her folded arms on Helen's lap. Now and then,



she gave a happy sigh. Helen listened, it seemed, with one part of her brain; the other was in a sort of hazy dreamland. Would Miss Morse some day keep house for her brother? Would they have a pretty room with a bright fire and a glowing lamp just sufficiently shaded to send delicate artistic shadows about? Would they pause now and then to discuss some point? He had such a fine, resolute face, with certain tender lines in it when he smiled; not handsome, perhaps, but with the charm in which his personality played a part; it showed the living up to high ideals, yet that he was broad enough, generous enough, to pity want and suffering and sin, even, with the earnest desire to help. A sentence came into her mind: "No man liveth unto himself." Did she consider some one who judged events as they gave pain and pleasure to himself?

A girl's idealism is after all not so unsubstantial, because it enters intimately into the land of youth. Experience may bring wisdom, but it also takes with it the glow and fervor, the courage to attempt the nobler



deeds of life. So youth and ideals have their day and their use.

Sidney Morse did not leave them until Saturday.

"I am almost spoiled with this play of home-making," he said to his sister. "And when we get to middle life and have the real home, there must be some growing girls in it. I have never quite decided how much college would do for the ordinary girl who must marry the ordinary man, while it does fit women for teachers and the professions, if they desire to enter the arena. But your girls are a little unusual, I think; even that poetical and quaint girl whose eyes are full of adoration."

"Oh, there are many others, but I am especially interested in these! I knew you would enjoy such a visit, and it has been a great pleasure to me. I have promised in the summer to visit Miss Craven."

"Beg an invitation for me," and he laughed.

So they said good-byes, Helen declaring it had been one of the splendid vacations. Then



they picked up their traps and walked rather reluctantly over to the college. There was to be a midnight service; there were also various charms the freshmen and sophomores were planning to try.

But the little group went to chapel, and stayed to some inspiring singing and a few short addresses on the closing of the year, the endeavors for the new.

It would bring to her, Helen realized, the closing of her college days, the final adjustment of the question that had caused her so much indecision and conscientious wavering. But she knew now she could not marry Willard Bell, much as she liked him, dearly as she loved his mother. Marriage was a very sacred thing; it had grown of higher importance to her in the last few months. Willard might attain to a fine position in the legal world, for he was ambitious, but their ways would not be quite alike. There would be a note somewhere to make a discord, a sort of undercurrent that would be felt in the heart, but not sharply enough to give any outward sign. Would he suffer long or deeply?



“A happy New Year! A happy New Year!” Girlish voices rang out, light feet skipped up and down the corridors. All the halls were illuminated. A welcome was sung, then the lights went out, and Sunday began.



## CHAPTER XVI

### THE LAST LEAF OF COLLEGE LIFE

“OH, how do you stand? Will you get through? What are you going to do when you graduate?” and fifty other questions were asked the different students, interspersed with, “Did you have a good time? Whom did you hear? Did you see any first-class play? Oh, dear! and now it is dig, dig, until your poor brain is one pulpy mass, and everything slips through. A little learning is a dangerous thing, but if you can’t get much to remain in your leaky bucket, be content with the little. There is first-class philosophy for you.”

Most of the girls went to work with a will. Only those who had been demoralized by pleasure groaned.

“See here,” began a girl who had just come in, “do you know there has been a fine



wedding in New York, to the honor of the college, perhaps? There was a glowing account in a society paper. Let me read it to you."

"It isn't Carol Saybrook?" and the questioner flushed, then turned pale, while an anxious expression came into her eyes.

"It just is. Didn't she keep it close? A big New York banker, a widower with two married sons, and grandchildren. Oh, good gracious! Carol a grandmother! He must have been quite old. Listen."

There was a brilliant description of a church wedding, the beauty and elegant gown of the bride, the reception at the hotel where the bridegroom had a handsome suite of rooms, a matinee party the next day to some of the choice guests, and the sailing of the bridal party for Europe on Saturday. Everything had been quite splendid.

Helen paused to listen. This was Wednesday. There had been plenty of time for a note to reach her if it had been written. She thought of her money, and she had borrowed thirty dollars of it.



"Girls," began Miss March in an indignant tone, "Carol Saybrook is a deceitful fraud! We have been very dear friends for some months; at least, she has confided her woes and tribulations to me. She thinks her father has grown very careless and indifferent and mean in money matters, egged on by a young stepmother, who hates her. When she bought that elegant new suit, she supposed he was going to send her another check; if he did not, she would have to leave college. I was sorry when she was so near graduating. She wanted to go to New York, where she thought she could get a high-up position at a good salary, and she had a friend who would lend her the money to repay me. But go she must, and she had a few small bills to pay that seemed to weigh on her mind. I suppose she had this scheme all arranged. Perhaps she was not sure of the man. She might have sent me my money out of the generous check her new husband gave her. There was time enough between Thursday and Saturday noon. She is a swindler!"



Miss March had talked a flash to her eyes and a crimson glow to her cheeks.

"And she owes me ten dollars," said another.

"She never paid back postage stamps or quarters, and she used half my box of handsome stationery. I didn't lend her any money, for I never had any to lend. But I always paid up my small debts when my allowance came and started fair. I knew she was rather deceitful, but I can't imagine any respectable girl being so dishonest."

"Don't you suppose her father will pay up the bills?" commented some one.

"Oh, that's a bright thought!" declared Miss March. "I'll write to him."

For the next few days, Miss Saybrook was a fruitful source of comment. It seemed now that she had been perfectly reckless since the commencement of the fall term.

"But I don't wonder the old man fell in love with her. She was handsome; and, girls, she could be awfully sweet, fascinating."

"Helen," Leslie said when they were alone, "I hope you haven't been caught in this net."



I suggested carefulness to you. I do not like to start any unfair prejudice about a girl, but she did borrow some small sums of me, although she paid them back again. And twice I declined. It is a bad thing to be continually borrowing."

Helen turned scarlet. "She seemed in so much trouble, and I did feel sorry for her. Then—it was her standing in college that was in jeopardy. She wanted to graduate —"

"I think she couldn't have been quite sure of the man and temporized. But she took her trunk and all the things of value except her curtains and pictures. She gave her rug to Miss Porter as security for some borrowed money."

"She told me about the man. He was sixty; she did not love him, and I thought it dreadful to marry that way."

"Well, you had better join Miss March and appeal to her father."

Helen thought that an excellent idea and forthwith interviewed Miss March. She was much mortified that she had been so easily



wrought upon by a girl she had never thoroughly cared for. Had she any real stability, any force of character, any clear judgment?

They heard later on that Miss Saybrook had not paid the last half of the semester. Mr. Saybrook paid that as a debt of honor, but he wrote to the girls that he had repeatedly told Carol that he would not send her a penny outside of her regular allowance. College morals and honesty could not have a very high standard, he thought, if this was the manner in which extravagance was fostered. Besides her own small portion, she had cost him a great deal. She was of age, and he was not responsible for her debts. If all accounts were true, she had a rich husband, and he advised the girls to apply to him.

"You see, girls do owe the college that they are in some duty and respect," commented Miss Brooks. "I dare say Mr. Saybrook will tell this story over to our detriment, and perhaps denounce college training as leading to many evils. But these events occur rarely on so extensive a scale," smiling sadly, "and I hope you will not be a great sufferer."



Helen was silent. She was ashamed that she could have been so easily deceived. She did not realize that an honest, upright, sympathetic nature could more readily be duped by a scheming one, and she was glad she had returned Leslie's money before this came out. No one but herself must suffer for her imprudence.

However, the affair did bring about a check in the habit of borrowing among the girls.

With it all, Helen had never been happier. Miss Morse was taking a great interest in Shirley, and giving her some good training. Her mental horizon was widening; she did not love Helen less, but there was not so much extravagant worship in it. She found she could write on more than one theme, and the *Miscellany* welcomed her warmly.

"She has a passion for literature and a great love for history, but no head for mathematics!" declared Miss Van Meter. "She *must* be pushed over in the sophs this year. Helen, you and Miss Brooks do all you can for her."

But a girl who wandered off into the realms



of fancy in the midst of a problem and listened to unseen music was hard to train.

Helen found her duties as class president were rather more arduous than she had anticipated. There were several important questions to decide; there were plans for commencement. The seniors' Easter would be marked by a grand concert, to which all friends were invited, and there was considerable training for that. But Easter fell late this year. There was the day of prayer for colleges, Washington's birthday, and the spring recess, at which few of the higher class girls went away. Study was of great importance now, and the lovely days of spring wooed to out-of-doors pleasures and sports. Every walk and nook grew dearer to Helen. How could she endure a new home and new occupations!

The concert was a grand success. There was some fine musical talent, both vocal and instrumental, and the applause was cheering and discriminating. Now attention must be turned to the play the seniors were to give,



and to their farewell tea. But then they would have their week exempt from duty.

“Oh, will you look at this!” Shirley cried, flying into Helen’s room with a piece of music in her hand. “Your friend sent it to me, Miss Grant. While he was here I put a tune to it, just picked it out on the piano, you know, and sung it. It was that little ‘Birds’ Lullaby.’ And he just wrote down the notes and took the words with him. And some one he knew has arranged all the parts and printed it. Won’t you come and play it? Wasn’t it lovely of him! A real song; think of it!”

Her eyes were rapturous in their delight, her pretty lips quivered with the sweetness of youth and joyousness. Helen could not resist kissing them in their ecstasy.

“You are so sweet and good. Father is afraid you will think me silly. But some things make me so happy. I want to dance with the birds. But I’ve heard a mother bird sing just such a song at nightfall. Come!”

She seized Helen’s hand, and they went to the music-room. One girl was practising down at the far end. There was golf and





HELEN RAN HER FINGERS LIGHTLY OVER THE KEYS. — *Page 379.*







tennis going on out on the grounds, with players and spectators. Helen sat down and ran her fingers lightly over the keys, making a soft liquid sound.

"Can't you sing it?" she asked.

"Oh, I've forgotten every note of it!" and she gave a light ripple that ran over her face like sunshine. "You try it."

"A mother bird swings from her rosy nest,  
Crooning her babies to sleep,  
With a lullaby soft as the whispering wind,  
A tender vigil to keep ;

Lullaby, Lullaby."

There were but three verses, and the music lent its sweetness to the dainty words. Shirley listened in rapturous attention.

"The music is just fascinating!" she cried. "It was so splendid in your friend. And there was a little note — oh, I ought to have brought it, but I was so carried away with the surprise! You must read it."

How innocent she was!

"And you must learn to sing it; we will have such a nice time practising it. Now, go



over it with me. You have just the voice for such dainty little things," said the elder.

When Helen went to her room, her mail lay on the table, and a roll of music also. Willard explained how attracted he had been by the song and Miss Chardavoyne's exquisite air put to it. A friend of Mrs. Osborne's composed music and arranged it for voice and piano, and a music publisher had taken it up. He hoped Helen would like it, and that it would give pleasure to Miss Chardavoyne. He would be glad to come up some Friday and spend Saturday with them.

Shirley's note was a very proper one, with no effusiveness. Helen was really pleased with it, and glad of a new interest for Willard. He now went often to the Osbornes; there were two bright girls growing up to womanhood. If he could see some charm in others!

Why should he not come up and spend Easter Sunday? She answered at once, most cordially. Leslie was warmly interested, and Lorraine enthusiastic in her delight. A girl with less simplicity might have felt elated



with the compliments showered upon her gift, but Shirley seemed to regard the music as the great thing.

“Oh, if life could be all music and poetry and spring and flowers and love!” the child cried in a burst of rapture.

So Willard came up at the appointed time. There was a delightful Easter even service, and then a walk under the fragrant trees where the moon-rays crept through the young leaves. Miss Morse invited them all to her room to a little tea, and asked in several other girls.

It seemed to Helen she had not liked Willard as well in a long time as on this Sunday. He was manly and dignified, dividing his attentions impartially. Of course he could not help but be pleased by Shirley's enthusiasm.

Lorraine looked on with a rather jealous eye.

“I think Mr. Bell belongs to Helen, and though Shirley is a charming little body, I shouldn't want her to come between. Helen is a splendid girl; one of the brave, fine kind, and she ought to have the best of fortune. Do



you not think so?" she asked, as Leslie did not reply immediately.

"She is worthy of the best. I liked her the first moment I saw her, and I never could tell just why. Maybe it was love at first sight. And I've always found her true as steel. I had begun a little romance about her and Mr. Morse, I admired him so much. And there was the visit at Hope, you know, and he is so interested in that cousin of hers. Oh, isn't it funny how we pick out lovers for our friends and they pick out some one else!" A smile of merriment flashed across her face.

"Oh, I liked Mr. Morse wonderfully, too! He is coming to commencement."

Then there were a few weeks of arduous study when teas fell into disrepute and athletics were neglected. "Engaged" was tacked on doors, lights glowed over transoms until midnight. Examinations began. There were fearful hearts, racked nerves, trying ordeals, curiosity as to who would be honor girls, and who would have the papers and the songs and the class poem.



"The poem can't fall to me," Helen declared gaily. "So I am at rest on that score."

There was the morning of records when the honors were to be decided. Girls huddled in the corridor, impatient to carry the news and congratulate the fortunate ones. Then the names were read, the notifications signed, the door opened.

Lorraine rushed to Helen and clasped her arms around her in a strangling fashion.

"You were the very first," she cried. "You headed the list. An honor girl! You won the freshman prize, you skipped a class, you are an honor girl! And you have one of the papers! That's a pretty good college record!" and she was kissing her rapturously. "I wish you were my sister!"

"Oh, thank you!" There were tears in Helen's eyes, but there was also the gladness of happy youth.

Before the day was over she seemed to have an ovation. The honor girls met in her room, and had a gay rollicking time over a surprise supper two of them had ordered, with Miss Brooks for hostess. But Helen's heart went



out to those who had longed for and tried vainly to stand in the charmed circle.

“ I must tell you what has happened to me ! ” exclaimed Leslie with a happy light in her eyes. “ I heard that Miss Gordon, one of the instructors in English language and literature, was to be married, and I applied for the position. This afternoon I had a notification that I was accepted. So you can visit me next year, and for many years to come, perhaps. It has been my ideal life — to remain here.”

“ I am so glad for you.” Helen kissed her warmly, wondering if she would not like such a position herself. One really grew attached to the instructors; they did not seem so far off from girlhood as the professors, though wasn't Miss Morse a real girl at heart, understanding the ways and desires of youth?

The seniors gave a reception to the girl who had won the freshman prize, though she had not been asked to step over the heads of the sophomores. Then there was the grand tennis tournament that called in spectators from the small towns around; also, the last basket-ball contest, in which Betty Garnier



distinguished herself, even though she was rather lame in her Latin verses.

Mrs. Bell wrote the tenderest of letters, which gave Helen a pang. Could she fulfil the desire of the mother's heart? Yet, she shrank from disappointing their hopes. Willard was less exigent than formerly, more like the good comrade he used to be. They would both come to the commencement; it was one of the pleasures she was looking forward to. Would Helen find her a comfortable place to stay? She was anxious to see Helen's friend, Miss Craven, and Willard had been very enthusiastic about the college.

She had engaged a room for Juliet. Every space was being eagerly taken. She went to interview Mrs. Bayne.

"Now, if you could use two small rooms with one going out of the other, three ladies would take the large room if I would put in a cot."

Helen considered; Juliet was very obliging, and it would be pleasant for Mrs. Bell to have some one to guide her about who knew the college well.



"You must keep yourself fresh for your thesis, remember, and be in good voice," entreated Leslie. "There is the play, and all the work it is going to make. Just the night before, too."

"That will be largely scenic and musical, and the juniors have been just royal about it. As for my 'piece,' " with a queer bit of emphasis, "I've gone over and over it, asleep and awake. After the discussion, it seems as if I could stand anything."

"That was splendid!" and Leslie's eyes kindled with pride in her friend.

The seniors were a little afraid to attempt a grand play again, lest it might not be so successful as last year and cause invidious comparisons. So they had selected two scenes from "Midsummer Night's Dream," and altered them somewhat, "out of deference to Shakespeare," one girl said. It was to be an out-of-doors entertainment. But, if it rained! Why, then the great hall must be used, but it wouldn't be half so nice. They took all the smaller girls for fairies, and there were to be several beautiful dances.



Miss Craven was to come early and be of all the assistance she could to Helen. There were mothers and sisters and friends; every cottage overflowed, and many guests had to remain at Bedford.

"The college authorities will have to build a hotel presently," some one suggested. "Then we could invite our friends in the short vacations."

Helen and Juliet went to the station to meet the noon train for Mrs. Bell, as Willard could not come until the next day, just in time for the play.

"Do let mother see all the girls that were in the Christmas party," he wrote. "Make her as much at home as you can."

She looked very sweet and pretty in her widow's cap and white strings, but she had aged a good deal. Still, she was in excellent health and had lost her languid air. Marjorie's little girl had taken her back to the years when her own babies were her joy and interest. She liked her room, and became friendly at once with Miss Craven. Helen



brought all the girls over in the afternoon and they had a pleasant time.

Oh, the prayers that went up for a clear to-morrow! There was every sign of a good day, to be sure. Some of the girls were up at the first break of dawn, and when the sun began to rise there was racing up and down corridors and knocking at every door. "It was the jolliest sun!" they declared, "just glowing with good humor."

The sophomores and freshmen scoured the wood and the adjacent groves for vines, laurel, rhododendron branches, and evergreens. The staging and the background were hurried up and draped in everything green that could be begged or borrowed, festooned, and interspersed with great clusters of crêpe flowers. It made no difference to them that it was not classic Athens. There were stalls on both sides for the musicians, and tiers of seats for the audience, although they knew half must be standing-room.

It was a beautiful woodland scene, the lanterns arranged so as to shed an enchanting sort of light. At eight, the moon came up



and the blue vault was set with stars. The music was mysteriously sweet, and a dance of fairies in diaphanous attire elicited a storm of applause. There was Titania and Bottom; there was mischievous Puck, and Oberon. Helena and Hermia, first dazed and then waking up. Dainty little songs were interspersed, but the crowning point was the rehearsal of Pyramus and Thisbe when the lovers had been restored to their normal state. It was extremely funny, the pathos overacted, of course. Helen was Pyramus and did her part bravely, and to cover the dead lovers rose Oberon and Titania with a host of elves dancing across the stage and singing to a bewitching accompaniment.

It lacked an hour still of midnight, and there was an opportunity to receive the plaudits and congratulations of friends. Helen and Leslie were the stars; they had a crowd around them and there were ripples of laughter on the summer-night air.

"It was really fine and entertaining," said Mr. Morse, reaching over for Helen's hand. "I shall see you always in the play. And



poor Pyramus! Your songs were a delight, but you didn't get them all out of Shakespeare. And your fairies were superb."

"Oh, thank you!" her eyes shining.

"And to-morrow! You girls are wonderful! I shall save the rest of my congratulations, if there is anything left of you by to-morrow night."

Then the great bell rang out and every one dispersed.

Another beautiful day dawned. There was hurrying and scurrying, forming the procession, the caps and gowns covering dainty girlish attire. The concourse of relatives and friends watched the procession with pride. It wound up the aisle, and with a soft rustle, was seated, and the exercises began. It was dreamlike to Helen. Was she really a part of it? Why did the picture of a little country girl in her best white frock repeating "Hervé Riel" come back to her? She thought of the school, the motley crowd, Mr. Warfield smiling upon her, and as she stood on the platform, the beauty blossoming of youth illu-



mined her face, and her voice had an uplifting sound.

All the papers were brief. After them there was the address to the graduates crowning their earnest endeavors, the congratulation, and the few words of impressive advice. How wonderful she had thought the first commencement here! Was she truly a part of this?

Friends were thronging about the honor girls, carrying their bouquets, and a dozen voices talking at once. It was better when they reached the open. Professor Blake shook hands heartily. "We must not lose you, Miss Grant," he said, his dry smile lighting up his wrinkled face.

The crowd had thinned a little. Helen was going over to Mrs. Bell, who was waiting in her tranquil fashion. Some one suddenly loomed up before her, caught her arm, possessed her hand, and gave it a warm clasp that thrilled her; a fine, manly figure, a strong, eager, forceful face, with resolution and courage in the clear eyes, and a joyous smile playing about the mouth. Oh, where



had she seen it! She had been introduced to so many cousins and brothers of the girls this very morning!

Her confusion deepened his smile. The flush made her cheeks all abloom.

“ ‘Sirs, believe me, there’s a way,’ ” said the voice that had a fascinating ring to it.

“ Oh, Gordon Danforth! ” she cried. What a tall, robust, manly fellow he was! She was so glad that she unconsciously put out her other hand, but when she would have withdrawn it he held it tight.

“ I can’t think — ” she began.

“ How I could have come here? A great surprise, isn’t it? I reached New York a few days ago, saw the Travis people, especially Mrs. Osborne, who is a great admirer of your Miss Craven — I understand they are doing some good work together — and we talked of the old summer down on Long Island. It seems as if it must have been in another life. Do you remember how we ran into each other in the fog? I’ve lived it over times without number. You see, when you are away from all you hold dear, without any real companion-



ship, books, and hardly a paper, taking long rides on horseback in all sorts of solitary places, you live over the pleasures of the past. I used to think of the little girl in short frocks repeating Browning out on the edge of the lawn, the larger girl down by the seaside, and I said I must see how much she has changed. Oh, I should have known you anywhere! You look just as I hoped you would. And you had forgotten me!"

He had uttered this in a low, rapid breath that carried her right along, but there was a half-reproach at the end.

"No, I had not forgotten. But you have changed a great deal." She studied him a moment, then her eyes drooped deliciously, the long lashes quivering.

"We must have a little talk. I go at five this afternoon. Every one wants you now, so I will wait a bit —"

They were pressing around. Mr. Morse grasped her hand and congratulated her. "But I was sorry not to hear the debate," he said with a mischievous smile.



"Oh, it wasn't a debate; only a discussion!" declared Helen, rather embarrassed.

"And you distinguished yourself!"

"She was just splendid!" declared Lorraine, eagerly.

"What was the subject?" asked Gordon.

"Which of the great wars has done the most for civil and religious liberty.'"

"And yours was —"

"That of the Netherlands,'" Helen returned.

"I'm glad of that," subjoined Gordon. "Centuries ago some of those brave old people were my forebears. Thank you in their behalf."

Their eyes met with a subtle sort of insistence, as if each were glad, and it was a bond between them.

"Now I must find Miss Craven," and he turned away.

It seemed to Helen as if the very air and sunshine were full of congratulations. She laughingly begged that some might be saved for next year's graduates.

"What a fine, spirited young fellow that



was!" Mr. Morse said to his sister. "Miss Grant picks up some admirable friends."

Helen gave her classmates a delightful appreciation of their work in her gracious manner. There was no undue elation.

"We're so sorry to have you go!" cried a dozen of the newly fledged seniors.

A pang went to Helen's heart and the quick tears rushed to her eyes. Was it her last day?

After awhile she and Lorraine came around to a group in one of the vine-wreathed alcoves: Mrs. Bell and Willard, Leslie and Shirley, Miss Craven and Mr. Danforth. They were all sipping ices and chatting gaily. Both young men sprang up.

"I'm coming here between Mrs. Bell and my very dear friend." Juliet made room for her, and Gordon stood up behind Miss Craven. Shirley was on the other side of Mrs. Bell, a charming figure in her white gown.

"You may go on with your talk!" exclaimed Helen. "I'm to be just a listener. My throat is dry, my brain empty, my energy spent, and there is the class banquet before



me. How many of you can remain until tomorrow? ”

Every one, it seemed, but Mr. Danforth.

Yet, already some of the scholars and guests were dispersing. A group of girls looked wistfully at Helen, who rose and went out to them. Had they indeed cared so much for her? She did not want to think of all these merry girls, their joys, their fun, their struggles, their contest, their efforts at success, and she not with them. Oh, how could she go! It was her sorrow more than theirs.

The campus and the grove were full of gay, moving figures, nymphs, dryads, here a group singing college songs, there a ring, dancing like sprites. There were girls with their arms around each other, girls with young men in their wake. Yes, she had seen it all before, but never with just this feeling.

Some one came and carried her off again.

“I’m glad you’re not a senior,” Willard said laughingly to Shirley. “I don’t know what my mother would do in that case.”

“Oh, I shall never be a senior! You can’t think how hard it was for me to get out of



the freshman class. Two years in it! And they all helped. But if people are born without gifts for certain studies, how can one get it into their brain or mind or memory? I'd just like to stay in one class. I don't know what I'll do without Miss Grant. But Miss Brooks will remain, and Lorraine. I like it all, too; and the teas and frolics."

She looked up with innocent, shining eyes.

"It's funny, but the first year I knew Helen — she came to our house with my sister, the prettiest and daintiest of the three girls, the one who is dead —" and his voice fell a little, "she was beginning Greek and I helped her over the tough places."

"Oh, did you! I gave up Greek, though father thinks it fine. It was too tough," laughing with a silvery ripple. "How your mother loves her! And you, too!"

It was more comment than assertion.

"She has been like a sister. Father was fond of her."

Did he really love her? Yes, he did. But a man could not go on forever getting nothing back for all his giving. What a sweet girl



Lorraine Denman was! And this frank, eager child! There was an elusive element about her that suggested many things, and that caressing cadence in her voice, that air as if she had just discerned something new and delightful in the speaker, then that sort of remoteness as if she lived in a little world of her own and was peering outside with interest as well as a dainty curiosity, was very delightful. He had never met any one like her, but then he had not met all the women and girls in the world. He was young himself.

She had been bewitchingly grateful about the song, and had promised to try again. And he had said, "Oh, I wish you didn't live so far away, but where one could see you often!"

"Father and mother do not like the North. They would never leave home. It is beautiful, but it gets dreary," and she sighed in an adorable manner.

So they chatted. Juliet and Mr. Danforth went for a walk about the college grounds, and presently Helen came flying toward them.

"A senior has many duties to-day," she



said with a sigh. "So you must pardon me —"

"I've been settling it with Miss Craven!" he exclaimed joyously. "She has asked me to visit her and promised that you will be there. There are so many things I want to talk over with you. One that may change my whole life —" and he paused.

That would be marriage, she thought. Oh, what was the girl like? He ought to have some one to keep step with him. Those resolute lines about the mouth were not there for nothing.

"It is too big a subject to discuss in a moment; I am not quite sure of myself. Perhaps you have heard that my father is very nicely settled. He deserves it all, and my brother is doing well. My sister is in the high school. There are many advantages where they are, and mother is happy. But Westchester is lovely; I shall never forget my boyhood days. And I first saw you there."

He turned a frank, glad glance upon her that made her color deepen.

Then he drew her on to talk of herself,



what she had done in these three years, how delightful they had been, and how life had grown in meaning and purpose. It was so easy to talk to him about the duty of living up to higher ideals. She could see the enthusiasm kindle in his face. Like Mr. Morse, he meant to express life so that others could see its true value.

"I am sorry to go," he said, "but it will not be a three years' absence this time. I'm going to take a rare holiday. Miss Craven, I thank you sincerely for your friendly hospitality. And now I must say good-by to you both. Wish the others a bright future."

And though he held Helen's hand, he did not glance up in her eyes. Her cheeks had a troubled, wavering flush.

They had walked beyond the college grounds. He touched his hat and was off with his energetic stride that had a certain grace.

"Hello!" as they turned.

She had been delighted to see her cousin after the exercises. Mr. Morse had met him



and taken him in charge, and they had been exploring the college buildings, to his great satisfaction. The laboratory, the museum, with its really fine if not large collection, and the library had proved objects of great interest.

"You have been so good," she said gratefully to Mr. Morse. "I've had such a very little leisure —"

"Nat, in a way, was *my* guest," he returned smilingly.

"And I've had just a splendid time. I shall be so packed with new ideas that I will be a year or two getting them to fit in the spaces. Oh, you needn't mind — we'll have *our* visit some other time! You won't melt away if all this airy fabric resolves itself into dreams."

"Miss Grant! Miss Grant! Come, they want you. All the graduates are being hunted up."

She waved her hand to the two she was leaving, and followed her mate to the banqueting-room. A hearty clamor of voices greeted her. Miss Brooks had been prevailed



upon to preside. Five honor girls were seated on one side, and Helen took her place next to the chief. First, the voices joined in one of the college hymns for invocation. Miss Brooks made a brief address, and then they proceeded to the feast. The table was in a glow of cut glass and silver, of flowers and wax candles; everything beautiful had been begged or borrowed, every one was in lovely evening attire.

They were a little grave at first; then the fun began. They talked of how they had felt as freshmen, the hills of difficulty, the sloughs of despond, the hopes and confidence that had been so cruelly dashed to earth, the fear of not passing, the awkwardness at games, the indifference to the gymnasium, and then the enthusiasm over all the matches, the stunts, the winning side, the learning to take defeat bravely. So it ran through all; yet, to Helen there was a throbbing undercurrent, as if a voice sang, "The last time, the last time."

She thought of how this one had gained unexpected honors, how that one had fallen



out; how few had done anything disgraceful, how many had achieved success in their chosen line. They feasted and jested, then the speeches and toasts began. Were they all so gay to keep from the thought of parting?

And at length came the songs, college choruses and glees, then a little graver ones in honor of the "Mistress and Mother" of adoption, the happy years, the glowing hopes of the future. And then all rose and joined hands in a circle, moving slowly to "Auld Lang Syne." Did the voices falter a little, the voices that such a brief while ago had rung with merriment? Kisses were exchanged in silence, good wishes in tones pathetic, tremulous.

It was late when Helen joined her friends, and they soon dispersed for the night.

"They are the loveliest lot I have ever fallen in with!" declared Lorraine, enthusiastic over her evening. "And just think! Miss Craven has planned the most splendid time that counts us all in, a house-party. And she's going to take Shirley Chardavoyne home with her. Mrs. Bell is to come, Mr. Morse,



and our dear professor, and can't you ask that fine young fellow who seemed to know you so well? Why, it will be just the loveliest thing! If I hadn't any folks, I should beg Miss Craven to adopt me."

They talked it over again the next morning and appointed the time. Oh, the hurrying and frantic questions, the loading of trunks, the hugs and kisses and tearful eyes, promises to write, to meet, the quiet girls with grave faces! Many were coming back — yes, even the seniors could visit their Alma Mater.

Helen tried to keep her voice steady amid the many good-byes. Teachers, professors, girl friends that had never seemed so dear, days that had known so much joy and satisfaction, that had been crowned with the riches of knowledge, that had developed and strengthened character, that had made one more earnest about the great things of life, the finer possibilities; all were in the past.

Then her own little party was in the train. Mrs. Bell sat beside her, but did not talk, only smiled now and then, gravely sweet, as if there was some hidden understanding that



said, "Be of good cheer. For whatever happens, it will all be right."

She turned to look out of the window. The dear old buildings were more and more hidden by the trees, and now the spire was lost. She was going out of sight of it all, to a new experience, to new duties. Ah, she was no longer Helen Grant, Senior, although it proved that her connection with the college that was so dear to her was not yet broken, as we shall learn from the next book, "Helen Grant, Graduate."















